

THE BOOK of Mad Men



A Sourcebook of Darkness for Mage: The Ascension™

THE BOOK of MadEvents

Whispers Without, Chaos Within



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Prelude: Vultures

By Kathleen Ryan



Amanda leans heavily against the thick rock wall of the gatehouse, grateful for any heat in Cerberus' desert night. An hour ago these stones were too hot to touch, but with the sun long set, their warmth is welcome to the young mage. For five hours now, she has stood vigil on the Peregrine Gate itself — five hours of scrutinizing the ward patterns as the visitors arrive, five hours of escorting them through the labyrinths of the gatehouse, and five hours of five-minute conversations before the monotony of the task returns.

She stares down vultures to pass the time.

When the last delegate begins his passage, it is midnight, and the glow of the wards mingles with Pluto's first light.

"It's about goddamned time." Amanda straightens and reaches for her bag. The patterns read well: the traveler is friendly and expected.

"Hello?" the man says, rather uncertainly and in the wrong direction. "Is there anyone there?"

"Turn around."

"Oh. Hello." More confidently, he faces her and smiles. "My name is Alexander Gericault." He pulls the collar of his trenchcoat higher. "And you must be Senex's new apprentice — Miss Jonsson?"

"Yes." She bites off the word curtly, but relents in the awkward silence that follows. With a sigh she slips back into the same impersonal small talk that she has kept up all day. "Yes, I am. Please call me Amanda."

"Gladly — Amanda," he says in a pleasant tone.

"Follow me please. The main buildings are this way." And she picks up a lantern from the shelf inside the door. "Have you been here before?"

"Not recently." Amanda hears the clatter as he picks up a light of his own. "But I used to come here often."

"Good. Then I won't repeat the whole warning. Just remember: stay very close —"

"Gladly." Her eyes roll. "In fact," Gericault continues, as they push open the first of the maze's many doors, "I was rather hoping that you would remember me."

Amanda glances back at him curiously. In the flickering, swinging light of the lamp, his expectant, smiling face seems to dance, and his hair floats in the draft that blows

through the corridor... the shadows lend his features drama, and his eyes seem to burn. For the first time she notices that this tardy, tiresome visitor is also a very striking man. "No, I'm afraid I don't," she says coolly. "Have we met before?"

Gericault's disappointment shows — his smile becomes bittersweet, and the flames reflected in his eyes seem farther away now, as though she sees them from a great distance. "Not in your lifetime."

Amanda looks away, down at the door latch in her hand — it's locked today. "I'm sorry?" They begin walking again, to another path she knows of.

He clears his throat nervously behind her. "I... well, I may as well come straight out with it. I was your lover, in your last incarnation."

"Oh." For a few moments she walks without speaking. "I'm sorry. I'm afraid I don't remember any of my past lives." But the words sound wrong to her, somehow. She swallows hard, very aware of his footsteps and his gaze. The air seems thicker to her, and the walls closer the deeper they go. After a while, they turn again. "What was she like?"

"She was very beautiful... like you, but dark," he says, "with nearly black eyes and hair, and a firm, square jaw when she was stubborn." They pause slightly, before a blank wall that Amanda doesn't remember. But she knows the gatehouse well enough to know that it often changes, and how, and she chooses a new route without stopping.

"She had a fierce temper," he says, and Amanda can hear the grin. His voice lowers, though, and when he continues the words are spoken softly, as if in reverence or prayer. "And a passionate nature, but she was gentle with her friends. Her name was Mercedes Gonzaga Ortiz, and we called her Mercy, though she had none." Only the wind answers him, and it, too, seems to mourn.

"We were partners, and lovers, and there were few in the Tellurian to match us for subtlety in our craft..." Here the passage comes to a dead end, and he faces her. "...but I'm sure that you've heard all of this already."

"No, none of it." She searches his face almost absently, and caught between the calm of his words and her own worry she notices the surprise that pulls at his eyebrows, though he hides it well. "We'll have to backtrack a little. Some of these walls have shifted since midnight."

They turn and move on, and he walks behind her. "Senex hasn't told you about Mercy?"

"Only the metaphysical variety — a sharp knife instead of a dull one. Did he know her?"

"She was his finest student."

"Oh." It seems to her all that she can say.

"Well, perhaps it's for the best," he muses. "If I were in his shoes, I would probably try to shelter you, too, until I thought you were strong enough to handle it."

Amanda sets her jaw and feels her face go hot. Strength, she feels, is no longer her problem. "Strong enough to handle what?"

"Just... well, too much ancient history. Old lovers, old enemies, old crimes... Mercy is dead, and you're alive, and it's your actions that should count now, not anything that she might have done." He sighs deeply. "But, if you'll do your Avatar's last life's lover one final favor..."

"What favor?" she asks warily.

"Answer me one question truly: Are you happy here?"

"I don't know," she answers after a long moment. "It's better than Earth was, most times. Sometimes the Old Man can really piss me off, but... it's like I was dead, working as Sander's hit-man whore and the Old Man near-killing me was what brought me back. There's a lot of bullshit going on here, but at least it's sincere bullshit, even when it's wrong."

Gericault smiles, and he laughs out loud. "True enough. I'll admit the initiation has done wonders for you, even though I wish me and mine had gotten to you first," he chuckles again. "But the bullshit — which clumps do you disagree with?"

"Too many." Amanda laughs herself, and swings the lantern out in a sweeping gesture. "Mounds. As soon as I figure out one thing I think is fact, I run into something that turns me right around —"

"— like the Second Seven?"

"Who?"

"David Cho and his motley crew."

"Right." For an instant she wonders how he knew, but the sentence runs along of its own accord as she does. "And the Old Man — he's no help with these things. Such a goddamn hermit... like everybody here. Sometimes I feel like —"

"— like they're not telling you everything?" Gericault interrupts with a voice like a spoken river. It catches Amanda in the pit of her stomach, and runs up her chest to silence her. "Conversations stopping when you enter the room, and the other students all off working together, without you? Visitors staring at you, and whispering frantically to the residents?"

"Do you ever get the feeling, Amanda, that perhaps they don't trust you?"

The lanterns are reflected in his eyes again, and the fire there doesn't warm her. It's all true — she knows it — as if he had read every word straight from the surface of her heart. But even as the anger rises, against the Old Man, it

is consumed by her sudden fear. In terror, she realizes what she talks with, and why he is here.

"Nephandus."

"Yes." His gaze never wavers, never relinquishes hers.

"They told me that something would come for me."

"Did they think you'd need the warning?" The husky whisper is like a physical thing, slithering into her ears.

"I won't listen to you."

"You already have."

"You lied!"

"No." He shakes his head slightly. "I didn't need to. With you, my love, the truth is my ally."

"What truth?" A spark of defiance rises in her. "Nothing you can say —"

"Silence," he commands, and even the echoes obey him. "Four things you must know, four things Senex would keep from you, if he could, and, in so doing, take away your will."

"Mercy followed me to the Cauls" — the young mage before him cringes at the very name — "for love... however strange that may seem to you."

"And when she left, and had made the choice to test the light rather than to shine, her best friend and teacher — your teacher — hunted her down and he killed her."

"And when she was reborn, in new form, he haunted her new life — your life — and cut off her past from her, as though she were fresh from oblivion... to keep her — to keep you — from remembering either your lover or your murderer."

"And now, I apologize for frightening you." He lets her go, but keeps talking, and though she does not hear him then, Amanda can remember the words clearly. "You need some time to think about these things, I know. Find someone you can *trust* to talk to and to answer your questions." He lifts his head as though listening, and then looks back, smiling gently at her. "I'll come back when you need me again."

Amanda staggers away from him as the lights fail. A great wind blows them out, and the world follows them. She wakes beside the Perigrine Gate: Pluto is rising, and the wards have a dim glow of a passage newly begun. Behind her, a cascading thunder of footsteps echoes through the gatehouse.

Suddenly, everything and everyone seem to surround her — the Old Man and nearly a dozen other mages helping her up, greeting the real visitor, talking loudly, gesticulating into space, setting new wards — and she lets them do it all, with the Old Man's arm on her shoulders, with his terrible kind eyes watching her.

One of the others — some pompous Adept with a name she forgets and lecherous hands she remembers — comes to them smugly. "Well, he's gone now. It's all over." But the Old Man ignores him, and they turn, and he leads her through the maze without a word.



Introduction: Elemental Howls

*Much Madness is divinest Sense —
To a discerning Eye —
Much Sense — the starkest Madness —
'Tis the Majority
In this, as All, prevail —
Assent — and you are sane —
Demur — you're straightway dangerous —
And handled with a Chain —
—Emily Dickinson, "Much Madness is Divinest Sense"*



Essence proceeds existence. Yet existence grants essence its form. A paradox. Substance begets form, but without form, substance is nothingness. A paradox. Sanity is enlightenment, a realization of the true nature of reality. Yet as every mage knows, to become truly enlightened, one must deny the reality forced upon oneself and create one's own.

Enlightenment, then, is madness. A dynamic psychosis.

There are no easy answers for a mage.

I am change, says the mage. I am growth, form and chaos and my will defines the universe. With but a thought, a revelation, I can change the laws of nature, shift the paths of stars, reshape reality to my will.

Nature comes howling back, knocks the mage sprawling, spits in his face and screams, *Bullshit!!!*

The mage dusts himself off and starts again.

Some of those elemental howls are pretty loud. This book is full of them.



Mad Dreamers

There are those, say the oldest tales, who dream the universe, whose wills define the laws that even mages cannot break. Bend, yes, but not destroy. The will of those unknowables shapes the form that gives substance to the Tapestry, sets the flows and patterns that mages alter. Their power mocks the mage.

Some Awakened defy these dreamers; others befriend them, beseech them, entice them or bind them. Try as they might, they cannot become them. These dreamers are not always kind — some rip minds apart like cobwebs, devour souls for midnight snacks, tear a mage's being from her body and turn it upside down or encase her in a forcefield of her own madness. A mage who steps beyond the Gauntlet is spoiling for a fight.

The Technocratic scientists would like to deny that any such beings exist. But they know that they do, and have dedicated themselves to protecting their charges, the Masses, from these unknowable things. Humanity, they say, is happiest and healthiest when sitting in front of a TV with a nice big dinner, a good job and a nice safe home. Perhaps they're right. Surely modern man would rather sip his beer than dodge a dragon. But the beings outside keep squirming around the edges of the Technocratic blindfold, and the scientists are hard pressed to keep track of which "truth" fell to pieces today. If Ascension is a mass belief and the people doubt everything they see, then what remains but for those people to create their own beliefs, their own madness, their own realities?

The dreamers of existence are out of control. And humanity, Sleeper and Awakened alike, are left to their own madness. It's not a pretty picture, but at least it's not boring.

How to Use this Book

The Book of Madness offers glimpses of these dreamers beyond the barriers; here you'll find mages touched by the dark side of the dreams, ones touched incurably by Dynamic change and Entropy's decay. You'll see beasts that science cannot accept, tempters formed from speculation, some spirits that hover just out of sight and others who spring forth from fears to safeguard reality. Read on, and use them well.

This book is not an endless list of stats to throw at heroes. Players have no fear of simple monsters. Atmosphere — mystery, doubt, uncertainty, apprehension and sheer revulsion — are the keys to using this book for all it's worth. There are plenty of creatures given here, but the real power of the mad dreamers is not in the statistics but in what you, the players and Storytellers, invest in them.

Each chapter offers some details about the beings in the shadows. Storyteller sidebars in each chapter give hints about how to use these beings in your Chronicle. Several sample creatures are given at the end of each chapter, but

Storytellers are advised to make up their own or alter the ones presented here. Any player worth her salt is going to memorize this book, and these unearthly beings are just statistics when you can see the zippers in their costumes.

Other Storyteller books, especially **The Book of the Wyrms**, **Umbra: The Velvet Shadow** and **The Storyteller's Guide to the Sabbat**, contain more creatures and night horrors than we could fit into this book (even if we wanted to reprint them all). The rulebooks for **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, **Wraith: The Oblivion** and **Vampire: The Masquerade**, as well as the player's guides for those games, are loaded with possibilities we can only hint at here. This **Book of Madness** explores the special "friends" of mages — the Nephandi, Marauders, demons, Diabolists and Paradox Spirits that make Awakening such a rewarding, if hectic, experience.

Contents

Prelude: Vultures

An old lover returns to Amanda, opening doors she cannot shut.

Chapter One: The Nephandi

Details the mages of Dark Reflections, their masters, allies and Path.

Chapter Two: Paradox

Explores the theories behind Paradox and the manifestations of same — backlash, storms and deadly spirits.

Chapter Three: The Marauders

A fond look at the Chaos Mages and their special madness.

Chapter Four: Demons and Demon Cults

Reasoned evil brings forth monsters; these monsters want your soul. Some fools are all too willing to give it to them theirs, or others', for a few simple favors...

Chapter Five: The Umbrood

The spirits of the Middle and Upper Umbrae, the realms of nature and idea. Like the other spirits in this book, these Umbrood have been constructed with the new spirit rules in the Appendix

Appendix: Systems

Contains the new spirit rules, changed for compatibility with **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**. This section also includes mechanics for Umbral adventures, Dark Sorcery, Demonic Investments, ritual magick and new Knowledges.

Blessed Sanity

All it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man alive to lunacy.

— Alan Moore, *Batman: The Killing Joke*

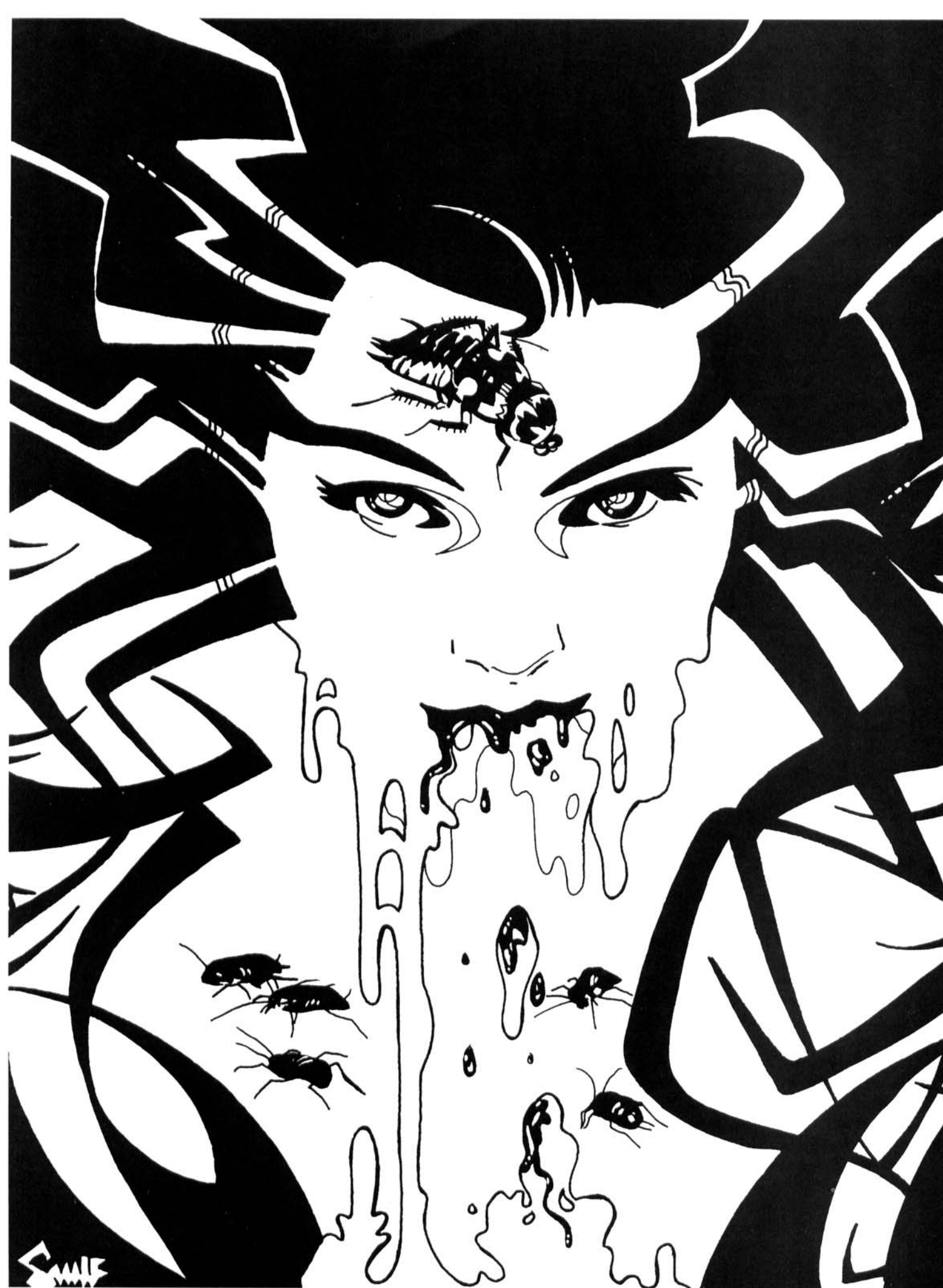
Once again, from the top:

Mage is a game. A fantasy and a metaphor. Period. This book does not include devil worship rites, real demonology, incitements to sacrifice or any other such crap. Those looking for scapegoats and sick thrills can get them elsewhere.

While we strive for mood, authenticity and a dash of real apprehension, we at White Wolf do not in any way condone or support Satanism, black magick, live sacrifice, suicide, prejudice or senseless violence. We do condone imagination, speculation, an open mind and creative anarchy. If these things offend you, read no further. We want only for you to ask questions and to think about the answers. If nothing else, have fun.

And don't come crying to us if you blow your head off listening to Elvis. We didn't make you do it.

On with the show...



Chapter One: The Nephandi

The blackness gathers about, so thick, so clinging, so penetrating, so oppressive, that all the other darkness that I have ever conceived would be like bright light beside it.

— Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*



Ned "Big Daddy" Cannaday had his eye on her almost from the instant he sauntered through the huge, red velvet-upholstered double doors. Paying his respects to the proprietress, he had a partial view of the poolside, of the slim, taut body spearing into the crystal-blue water. He pushed through a loud sweating knot of his colleagues, appeasing them with his latest ethnic joke, and made a bee-line to the pool.

Emerging into the opulent courtyard, he squinted against the sun, unable to look away as she pulled herself effortlessly from the water. Glistening curves, pert weightless flesh. Sleek smooth muscles rippled beneath the silky olive tan. Ned inhaled noisily, the rush of pheromones and chlorine hitting his brain like a freight train. He lurched forward, right arm outstretched, hand cupped, chubby fingers flexing in anticipation.

The courtyard tilted and the tile and concrete poolside smacked him upside the head.

"Big Daddy! I've been waiting a while to meet you."

He thought his face might be bleeding, or it could have been the heated water of the pool. He tried to touch his face but no hand appeared, and the effort caused a knot to tighten in his shoulder.

"What the hell —"

He felt her on top of him, flattening his fat belly against the ground. Two government-property ballpoints in his pocket pinched and jabbed at his left nipple, and, down in his trousers, the "Li'l Daddy" swelled and bent double against the wet sunbaked concrete.

"I was hoping you'd struggle a bit more, or at least squeal a bit for me. Don't you like that? When they sweat and squirm and twist their hankies? And that lovely look on their faces, that expression they get just before they give up and reach for their checkbooks. You know the look I'm talking about!"

She bounced forward, scraping him across the cement and sending a jet of pain up his arm, through his shoulder, piercing the base of his skull. His head now jutted over the edge of the pool, and inches away he saw his reflection, a fat ugly face twisted with agony, the piggy eyes pleading.

"Oh, yesss! That's the look!"

"What... uurngh... what do you want?"

"Mmm... It's not what I want, Big Daddy! It's what you want that concerns me. Or do you even know? Have you ever admitted it to yourself?"

"I want you offa me, bitch!"

"No, that's not it. Here, this will help you see." And she did something to his hand behind his back, something that nearly made him faint. His brain filled with conflicting kinds of torture, tendons snapping as fingers were bent backward, bones grating as the wrist was expertly dislocated, the flesh of his palm tearing as the fingers were pulled apart.

"Did you know that pain causes the formation of the strongest chemical bonds in the mammalian brain? Whip a dog, and it keeps coming back for more. At first it will hope that you'll stop, but after a while, it won't even know the difference. But you already know all about that, don't you, Big Daddy?"

Time melted away into the pain. He couldn't tell how long she held him like that. Finally something clicked over in his head and reality rushed back in around him, clearer and sharper than ever before. He felt her sharp nails dig into his expensive hairweave, wrenching his head around, twisting his spine into aching ecstasy, until he was staring directly up at her.

Dripping raven hair pulled straight back, half-closed eyes burning down at him, full sensuous lips framing that square little grimace that all his favorite Italian actresses seemed to do so well. And the sky behind her...

...wasn't sky at all, but some kind of pit. A Pit in which things moved. Swimming in and out of focus. Staring, he made out faces. Faces not so unlike his own reflection he had seen only an eternity ago. Faces distended in howling agony, parched lips pulled back from cracked teeth and bleeding gums, throats raw from shrieking. And their eyes, eyes shot through with burst capillaries, eyes welling with tears of blood, eyes that all turned toward Her, crying in adoration.

"Whuh...?"

"Ah, you see them? Good. You'll have some of your own one day. I like to think of them as my slaves. But you, mister senator, you can call them... constituents."

Dark Reflections



Before the coming of the Bringers of Light, there must have been Darkness. Every Avatar casts its own Shadow, and each Path to Ascension can be walked backward. In the shadows cast by the light of the mages, in the night which must always follow day, in the black void beyond all the realms of Gaia, in the deepest bowels of the underbelly of the Tellurian, there lurk the Nephandi.

The Nephandi are those mages who have sworn themselves to the service of the Outer Darkness, to extinguish the light of Ascension, to put the Awakened to sleep — permanently! — and to make the realms of Gaia ready and accessible to their masters in the Deep Umbra. In exchange for their servitude, the Nephandi are granted broader avenues for the accumulation of power both magickal and mundane.

The Dark Lords of the Nephandi are largely unknown, even to most Nephandi. Some call these forces "the demon hordes." Others refer to them as Banes, Maeljin Incarna, devils, aliens or simply Things That Must Not Be. Since time immemorial, the Dreamspeakers have held the belief that the Nephandi, their masters and allies are all serving an entity called the Wyrn, a great spirit of corruption whose power in recent times has swollen to apocalyptic proportions. The Celestial Chorus and Hermetic mages realize that many Nephandi have truck with demons and

devils from the outer realms. Tradition Technomancers speculate that the Fallen Ones have given their souls to vast, unimaginable Things from beyond the Horizon. All of these views are correct, with one simple addition: before Nephandi mages give themselves to the outer shadows, they surrender to the darkness within.

History

For as long as humankind has known magick, there have been those who would barter their souls for raw power or forbidden pleasures. While the truth-seekers who formed the roots of both Tradition and Technocracy often sought enlightenment for some common good, others clung to the shadows out of greed, hatred or sheer perversity. Dark magicians, spinning their powers out of pain and destruction, have been with us from the beginning.

It is believed that organized cults of Nephandi emerged during the rise of civilization. While miracle-workers tended their mortal flocks (or retreated far from the cities to work in solitude), these cults gathered their forces to bring the struggling cultures down. The beasts that great heroes battled may have been allies of the early Nephandi.

During Europe's Mythic Age, conflict between the Celestial Chorus, the Cabal of Pure Thought and the various Hermetic orders granted these mages hard-won knowledge and experience with infernal magick and the

demon hordes. What little lore Tradition mages gathered about the Dark Ones at this time was primarily derived from a tome called the *Malleus Neffandorum*, compiled in the sixth century by Abba Rabbiath of the University of Light and Frater Decimus of the Ikhwan at-Tawhid. Many modern sorcerers continue to use this book as reference.

Intended as a comprehensive handbook and guide to identifying and destroying corrupted mages, this work was freely distributed to the Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes (and, later, others) by Batini marshids organizing the tenuous "good faith" agreements that made the Web of Faith possible. Since then, every Tradition has kept an updated version of its own, and the Technocracy is known to have incorporated the *Malleus* into its databases. Although the knowledge contained in this volume has spelled doom for many *barabbi*, much of the text has been seen in recent times to be nothing more than anti-Euthanatos propaganda.

Interrogation and infiltration yielded surprisingly elaborate and often contradictory descriptions of the ranking echelons of Hell. Editions of the *Malleus* grew fat with variant infernal hierarchies (most of them apocryphal) but, as the names of the demon hordes became known, their influence grew as well. Belief fuels substance: when the shadows were given names, they assumed identity and form. Thus, many say, were the demon hordes born.

Since the formation of the Council of Nine and the rise of the Technocracy, most information concerning the Nephandi has been lost or buried deep within Chantry libraries. Younger, less experienced mages are often so totally involved in opposing the Technomancers that they may be entirely unaware of this dark front in the Ascension War. Many dismiss talk of demons and personified corruption as superstitions of bygone eras. Ironically, these unbelievers are often the easiest mages to corrupt. By denying outside powers, they become convinced that they themselves are the be-all and end-all of creation. This opens the door for hubris, temptation and corruption.

The World Wars

The years 1900 to 1944 saw the Technocracy and Traditions divided within themselves. Nationalism, opportunity and vengeance fragmented the two factions, and the carnage of the World Wars appalled mages on both sides. The Nephandi were quick to seize the advantage and nearly won the Ascension War before the close of World War II.

Although many of Hitler's Schutzstaffel occultists were Hedge wizards, Sleepers or nationalistic Tradition mages, several powerful Nephandi (especially Verbena *barabbi*) pulled many strings. Technocracy renunciates led horrific experiments, created vicious weapons and encouraged their fellows to greater excesses during wartime symposiums. When the Technocracy withdrew its support for Hitler in late 1943, they sided with the Council to crack



Glossary

All Nephandi speak the Dragon's Tongue, which is incomprehensible to any who have not been corrupted and Reborn. The terminology below is derived from the *Malleus Neffandorum*.

Adsinistratus: A Nephandus who travels the world, spreading evil and seeking souls ripe for corruption. (pl. Adsinistrati)

Ahriman: Nephandi cabal.

Aswad: A Dark Reflection of an Oracle. See Qlippoth. (pl. Aswadim)

Barabbi: A member of a Tradition or Technomantic Convention who has chosen to follow the Path of the Dark Reflection.

Caul: The place of Rebirth and Regeneration, located in the largest of Labyrinths.

Dragon's Tongue: The Nephandi's secret language.

Gilledian: A powerful leader of the Nephandi, usually the head of a Labyrinth.

Iblitic: A sect of the Ahl-i-Batin which attempted to infiltrate the Nephandi, but instead succumbed to the forces of corruption. (also called Iblitite, Iblisite; from the Arabic Iblisi)

Infernalist: A Nephandus who makes a pact with the demon hordes of the Astral Umbra.

K'llasshaa: Demented Nephandi who follow incomprehensible masters and care little for their own existence. Sometimes but not always followers of the Wyrms, the Things Beyond or both.

Labyrinth: A stronghold of the Nephandi.

Malfean: A Nephandus who pledges his services to the Wyrms.

Malleus Neffandorum: The handbook for those who seek out and destroy Nephandi. Originally written by the Ahl-i-Batin, every Tradition keeps its own version of this book, with the most complete and detailed versions held by the Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes. The predominance of Arabic and Latin in Nephandic terminology can be attributed to this tome.

Nephandus: One who has become corrupted and follows the path of Dark Reflection. (pl. Nephandi; adj. Nephandic. Engaging in Nephandic activities is Nephandism, known in archaic sources as Neffandery)

Outsider: A Nephandus who serves some inscrutable and incomprehensible entity of the Deep Umbra.

Pawn: One who serves the Nephandi, sometimes knowingly but often not.

Pit: A Labyrinth's ritual area.

Prelatus: The second-in-command to a Gilledian. (pl. Prelati)

Qlippoth: The Dark Reflections of the Shard Realms, corresponding to the nine Spheres of known magick. (pl. Qlippothim)

Shaytan: The most violent and destructive of the Nephandi.

Widderslainte: A natural born Nephandi, bad from birth, whose Avatar was corrupted in a former life. Debate continues as to whether *widderslainte* are destined to their Paths or if they can change through personal will.

the Nephandi wedge. Some of the wildest battles of the war pitted joint Technocracy-Tradition cabals against Nephandi hordes and cultists. News of these clashes was largely suppressed during the post-war clean-up, but accounts survive nonetheless.

The atomic detonation in Japan sealed the Nephandi's power. The Fallen Ones had pushed through their pet doomsday project, opening the door for the final endgame. While the joint Technocracy-Tradition alliance pushed the Nephandi back beyond the Horizon again, the Fallen Ones had gained a strong foothold. The Technocracy sought to purge the other "random elements" after the war, and the brief alliance soon collapsed. The vicious split between the Virtual Adepts and their former comrades occurred during the last years of the decade.

The vast destruction and disillusionment of the war fed the Fallen Ones. The post-war years have only strengthened their resolve.

Motivations

Although even the Nephandi themselves do not always agree upon the purposes which they share and the nature of the Lords whom they serve, all of their earliest histories and mythos do seem to revolve around a common theme. Before Gaia and the currently known Realm-systems were brought into being, existence was inhabited by entities of an entirely different, more alien, sort. Most younger *barabbi* believe that these entities were the earliest manifestations of the Pure Ones (a hated and ridiculous misnomer), whose novel experimental shapings of raw reality were later superseded by existence as we now understand it. Older Nephandi hold that their Lords antedate the Pure Ones and even Prime itself.

How such a manifestation and even personification of non-being could exist is never really explained. Proponents of this view say that "explanation" and "understanding" are merely the tools with which the Traditions and Technocracy enslave the minds of the newly Awakened. This kind of maddening ontological argument once erupted into a full inter-Labyrinthine war which resulted in the destruction of both sides. ("When even the Nephandi themselves are obliterated, then shall our Masters be most fully served," remarked a noted Iblitite wryly.) Nevertheless, this conflict served only to consolidate the shared purpose of all Nephandi, which is to open a way for the Dark Lords enter and reclaim the world from which they were expelled.

The Dark Lords

*Behind the Veil what gulfs of Time and Space?
What blinking mowing Shapes to blast the sight?
I shrink before a vague colossal Face
Born in the mad immensities of Night.*

— Robert E. Howard, "An Open Window"

Those whom the Nephandi serve are obscure and incomprehensible, even to the Nephandi themselves. The information concerning them given in this section is sparse for a reason: the deepest, darkest horrors are those that are hinted at and suggested, rather than explicitly described. Storytellers should reveal the existence of their villains' true masters only at the climax of a long series of stories, or even the Chronicle itself — if at all.

For all intents and purposes, the Nephandi may be broken down into three broad categories which reflect the specific ideas they have concerning their own nature and those whom they serve: the infernalists, the Malfeans and the Outsiders.

Storytellers may not wish to make use of these categories. They may prefer to use one type to characterize all Nephandi or may simply find such distinctions irrelevant to their Chronicle. Others may wish to exploit these divisions, allowing their players to use factional rivalries against Nephandi villains. Since the Industrial Revolution, infernal influence upon Sleeper society has dwindled while Malfean corruption has spread. Outsider cults seldom cooperate or even communicate with other Labyrinths and occasionally turn on other Nephandi for no apparent reason whatsoever.

Rulers and Potentates of the Realms Infernal

Infernalism refers to the Inferno, the abode of the demon hordes in the Astral Umbra. Infernalists are the most numerous among the Nephandi and until recently wielded the greatest influence in Sleeper affairs. The Inferno represents, and the demons personify, a kind of intellectual opposition, the evil that must necessarily exist to define goodness. Many Demon Lords claim to be the original Pure Ones who laid the groundwork for reality, only to be ousted by later rivals. The Path of the Dark Reflection finds its most refined expression in infernalism.

The demon hordes, as they are collectively known, are manifestations of evil thoughts and ideas, and their infernal abodes reside in the Astral Umbra, the spirit plane of thought personified. Though it is very difficult for them to manifest on Earth directly, they can nonetheless exert a great deal of influence upon earthly affairs through their manipulations of human minds. Knowledge of a particular demon's existence can be that demon's greatest asset, for any thought directed to a demon tends to strengthen his grasp upon reality. Only the most experienced opponents of the Nephandi have learned to use the knowledge of a demon against it.

Chapter Four has more extensive details about demons. Storytellers are also referred to the **Storyteller's Handbook to the Sabbat**, a sourcebook for **Vampire: The Masquerade**, for further information about demons in the World of Darkness.

Maeljin Incarna of Malfeas

Malfean Nephandi claim the deepest understanding of the Sphere of Entropy, for they serve the Great Corrupter that originally maintained the balance between Order and Chaos (known respectively as the Wyrms, Weaver and Wyld in Dreamspeaker and Garou cosmology.) Malfeans weaken the stability and rigidity of Order into collapse and dissipate the wild energies of Chaos into impotent stagnancy, seeking to annihilate both extremes. The Malfean Lords are the Maeljin Incarna of Malfeas, the Deep Umbral Realm of the Corrupter Wyrms.

Malfeans vex the Euthanatos, for both serve the cause of Entropy. Many Dreamspeakers (and their Garou allies) lump the two together. The Euthanatos, however, maintain that their Good Death leads to Rebirth, to a new chance on the karmic wheel. Some fanatic Euthanatos claim that the entire world as it stands needs a trip along this cycle. The distinction between these extremists and the Malfeans is fine but important: the Euthanatos believe in a new and better world rising from the ashes of the old. The Malfeans want nothing but ashes to remain.

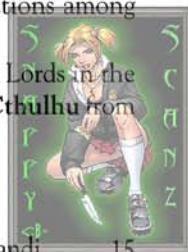
For a complete description of Malfeas and the Maeljin Incarna, see the **Book of the Wyrms**.

Those That Dwell in the Outermost Fringes of the Tapestry

The Outsiders are so named because they do not fit into either the infernal or Malfean cosmological views, and in fact do not even agree with each other about their Lords. They are the most destructive and insane and downright alien of all the Nephandi, and, luckily for everyone and all of existence, the rarest as well. The Realms of those whom the Outsiders serve are collectively known as the Fringe Realms, as they are believed to be in the deepest of the Deep Umbra, the "fringes" of the Tapestry.

One rare and demented Nephandi sect, called the K'llasshaa by some, are thought to have endured great visions of their dread masters. While some K'llasshaa belong to Malfean groups, most appear to follow the Outer Things rather than any Wyrms manifestation. Then again, their perception of that Wyrms can easily be seen as a Dark Fringe God-Thing. So much for easy distinctions among the mad.

The very best examples of Outsider-type Lords in the roleplaying medium can be found in **Call of Cthulhu** from Chaosium.





Paths of Dark Reflection



His voice comes in a whisper: O thou that art master of the fifty gates of understanding, is not my mother a black woman? O thou that art master of the Pentagram, is not the egg of spirit a black egg? Here abideth terror and the blind ache of the Soul...

— Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*

Those who embrace corruption wear many faces. Some begin their twisted destiny early, while others fall away from their chosen Paths and join the *barabbi* renunciates. While the Fallen Ones resist easy classification, some generalizations can be made.

Widderslainte

(WID-der-SLAN-sh)

*We drink the vomit of the priests
Make love to the dying whore
We suck the blood of the beast
And hold the keys to death's door*

— Venom, liner notes to *Black Metal*

Many Tradition mages (and most Technocrats) believe that “true” Nephandi have all been exiled to the Deep Umbra. They are wrong. While many Nephandi join after their Awakening, some few begin their Path of Sin before their enlightenment. When the Awakening comes, these new mages are drawn headfirst into mind-crushing evil. These *widderslainte* have no bad habits to break; they choose to ride into Hell before they Awaken.

The poisoned Avatars of slain Nephandi sometimes worm their way into new incarnations within the Earth's barriers. These “bad seeds” are rotten from birth. Some ruthless mages or knowledgeable witch-hunters have pursued possible Nephandi reincarnations, intent on wiping them out before the Avatar Awakens. More often than not, however, the bad child grows into a dangerous adult. The Avatar, when it Awakens its new incarnation, merely fulfills a dark destiny. Such “true-born” Nephandi are called *widderslainte*, which translates roughly into “counter-life” or “against health.” Quite literally, these mages are diseases of the Earth.

Widderslainte tend to be more subtle than renunciates. This subtlety, along with a certain “pedigree,” grants the mage a certain status among her kind. They have no need for the Rebirth (see below), though many indulge anyway. Clippothic Entropy magick (also below) comes easily to them, and they tend to have strong Avatars (three or better, in game terms). Many are instructed by potent Mentors — shadowy figures, sadistic cultists, seductive guides and hideous supernatural creatures are fairly common — and most have some permanent disfigurement to mark their birthright. Echoes, Past Lives, Primal Marks, Dark Fates and Disfigurements are common Merits and Flaws of natural born Nephandi.

Barabbi

Just dig a hole that's deep enough, and everyone will want to jump into it.

— Sum Chin, Zen Philosopher

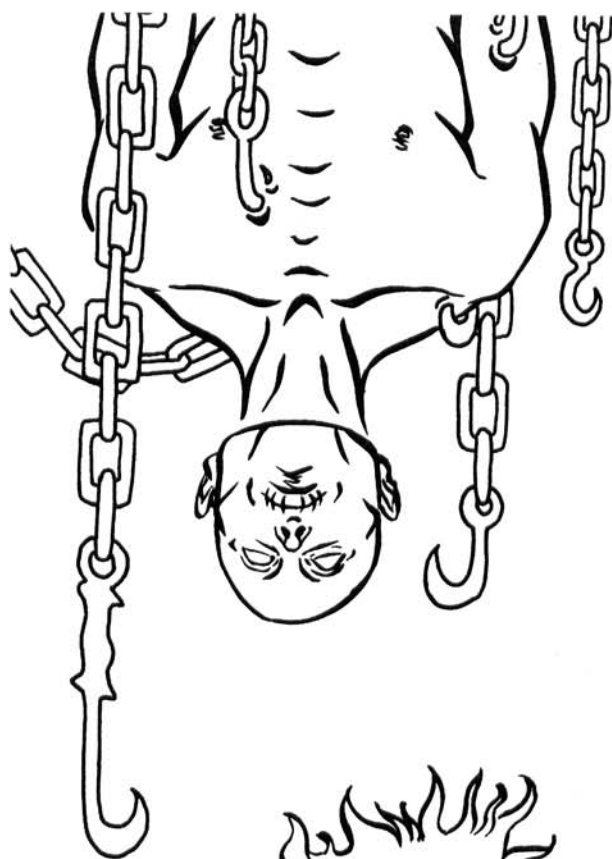
It is among the renunciates that the conception of the Nephandus as a necessary and inevitable reaction to the Ascension of the Traditions is most eloquently expressed. Young mages in particular are susceptible to this kind of reasoning and often feel that they have uncovered a Deep Truth. By enlarging their paradigm of the Tellurian, they have found a balance and equilibrium which justifies the existence of this misunderstood evil. Any mage who has actually fought the Nephandi will dismiss this kind of talk as “apologist revisionism” and point out that the Nephandi-Lords entice their followers with lies such as this (and usually begin plotting to expose the corrupted soul of the speaker as well).

One Nephandus who was fond of delivering long gloating speeches to his intended victims explained himself thus: “You can consider us to be the Path of Dark Reflection, the negative example by which you Traditions can determine what is truly good and right. For each entity that Awakens and lifts its face to the light, another must sink deeper into the nightmare of darkness. It's all a matter of balance, really, a process of completing the ‘fearful symmetry’ that is the plan and pattern of the Tellurian. The plane of all existence is shaped by the interplay of your Ascent and our Descent, and the tension between us is the energy that makes the world go ‘round. So cease your useless struggling, my dear! What I am about to do to you is equally necessary to us both...”

Many Euthanatos throughout the ages have joined the ranks of the *barabbi* after receiving a vision of the fate of the world not unlike that described above. In the end, Light and Dark, Ascension and Descension, cancel each other out, clearing the slate for a new age of creation as it were. These renunciates envision themselves as working toward the “Good Death” of the Tellurian. As they descend deeper into the Darkness, however, they learn eventually that even this greater cycle must ultimately be abolished to accommodate the will of their masters.

Only the Marauders seem to have escaped the *barabbi* scourge. The Chaos Mages are thought to be beyond good or evil. The K'llasshaa resemble Marauders in their terminal psychosis. Unlike their hyper-Dynamic cousins, however, the K'llasshaa are not immune to Paradox. Instead, they frequently immolate themselves in spectacular bursts of mad magick, taking everyone around them along for the ride. K'llasshaa rarely survive long enough to become truly powerful, but then, they seldom have to.

The Ahl-i-Batin claimed to have created a sect of infiltrators that had openly renounced the Doctrine of Unity and joined the ranks of Darkness. These agents, called the Iblisi, faithfully reported all that they learned to the Batini Qutbs, or so the Ahl-i-Batin claimed right up until the end. The Iblisi (also called Iblisites, Iblitites or Iblitics) are universally considered to be thoroughly and completely corrupted.



Barabbi Outlooks

The stereotypes given below should be taken only as suggestions. The vast variety of schisms and heresies which comprise the *barabbi* underground can only be hinted at here.

Akashic Brotherhood *barabbi* — Insanity is enlightenment seen for what it truly is. The Way can only lead straight down, the path of least resistance.

Celestial Chorus *barabbi* — That The One has divided itself into the Many, that simple truth, is our surest clue. Each one of us is but a symptom of God's multiple personality disorder.

Cult of Ecstasy *barabbi* — Pain is the sweetest of all pleasures, so be sure to spread it around as much as possible. Given time, everyone can come to understand this as we do.

Dreamspeaker *barabbi* — Think not that Gaia is the last and best of all Realms, for She is but the vessel of Those That Once Were And Shall Be Yet Again. Has She not fashioned us, Her children, Sleeper and Awakened alike, to make Her body ready for That Which Is To Come?

Euthanatos *barabbi* — Ultimately there can be only one death which is truly the Good Death, and that is the death of the cycle of rebirth itself, the destruction of the wheel of reincarnation and the cessation of all the ages of eternity.

Order of Hermes *barabbi* — The name of the game is Power. And it is a game which is, in the end, without rules.

Sons of Ether *barabbi* — Mother Nature, like any other uppity bitch, just needs to be slapped around until She finally learns Her place.

Verbena *barabbi* — We enter into life naked and howling, covered with blood. The fun doesn't have to end there.

Virtual Adept *barabbi* — Information desires to be free, and in the end, the only name for that freedom can be Oblivion.

Iteration X *barabbi* — The task before us is to divine the plan by which the Great Watchmaker assembled this machine we call existence. This done, it will be so much easier to take it all apart.

New World Order *barabbi* — Humanity desires no salvation, no truth, no Ascension. Watch them. They have been offered such more times than we can count and have flatly refused at every turn. Feed them their fish sticks and sitcoms, let them dissolve in their own mediocrity, and they shall make for themselves that Oblivion which our Lords require.

Progenitor *barabbi* — The Flesh is weak, it is said, but that weakness is our power. The Flesh shapes the world, and through the Flesh we shall shape the world to the will of our Masters.

Syndicate *barabbi* — We want it all. We want it right now. And we want it in cash.

Void Engineer *barabbi* — You think you know the Dark Lords? You don't know the Dark Lords. We know. For we are the ones who have extended our perceptions so far as to reach even the nether realms which They inhabit. It is we who know Their hearts and Their wills. It is we who shall hold the keys to Their domains, and it is we who shall open the gates for Them when the time comes!

Orphan *barabbi* — OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD JUST MAKE IT STOP! MAKE IT STOP! YES YES ANYTHING YOU SAY JUST MAKE IT STOP!

K'llasshaa — [voice reverberating as though from end of long corridor or bottom of deep pit] Order? Ha! Chaos? HaHa! Ascension? Nyah-hah! Darkness Corruption Oblivion Hai! Carkness Horruption Doblivion Harktion Dorrivness Coblupion Hai-Yai!! Bwahahahahahahaugh! [trailing off into coughing, gurgling, chortling noises...]

Ahl-i-Batin *barabbi* — Who, me? I'm working with you.

Ranks

*Trumpets triumph in red disaster,
White skulls litter the broken sod,
And we who ride for the one Black Master
Howl at the iron gates of God.*

— Robert E. Howard, "Black Chant Imperial"

With the vast diversity of factions, sects and cults that compose the Nephandi, no single hierarchy can be described which would cover all their ranks. Several ranks, however, are fairly universal. These can be considered more like job descriptions than hierarchic titles, but are listed in a kind of ascending order, from the most numerous and least powerful to those who are undisputed leaders.

The terminology used is drawn primarily from the Hermetic edition of the *Malleus Neffandorum* with its Latin and Arabic antecedents. While many of these terms were drawn from confessions extracted by torture, it would appear that some Nephandi do in fact use them as actual titles. Additional names for each type are provided to serve both as loose translations and as variant titular forms.

Pawns

(Churls, Snotlings)

The beginning rank of the Nephandus is that of the unwitting. Megalomaniacal Gilledians are fond of bragging that any who are not Nephandus still serve the Dark Lords whether they know it or not. Many find this funny until they consider the degree to which the Technomantic paradigm has been twisted into a soulless environment ripe with the very foulnesses the Nephandi favor.

For the purposes of this section, the term *pawn* refers specifically to mages. Sleeper pawns are described in the Allies section under "Acolytes." Magely pawns may be new *barabbi* or non-renunciates who are being manipulated by the Nephandi through mental domination, extortion, deception or brute force. Pawns exist in every Tradition, in all Conventions of the Technocracy and among the Marauders, as well as within any Craft large enough to hide corruption among its membership. Since the disruption of the Ahl-i-Batin, whole murid sects have fallen under Nephandic sway. Pawns who are not rooted out can sometimes rise to powerful positions within their Tradition (see Gustavius Hanfkopf under "Pacts," below.)



Shayfans

(SHAY-tans) (Wounders, Haters)

Open violence may be relatively rare in the Ascension War, but with the Nephandi holding one front, it is never out of the question. The shock troops of the Dark Ones are known as *shaytans*, derived from the Arabic form of Satan and translated by Sir Richard Burton as “hater.”

The shaytan is usually recruited from a rough poverty-stricken Sleeper environment. His Avatar is Awakened through a specialized form of psychic torture, and he is usually trained in the most destructive uses of Life and Forces, in addition to, of course, Entropy. Combat abilities naturally predominate in this group, but there are also many shaytans who specialize in the more subtle forms of mental and spiritual combat. One scholarly group called the Emborgiasts know more about poisons and poisoning methods than anyone else in the World of Darkness.

The Wing Kong Elite of the Household of the Jade Demon, from **The Book of Chantries**, are good examples of shaytan Nephandi.

Adsinistrati

(ad-SIN-is-TRAA-ti) (Tempters, Corrupters)

A Nephandus who takes the most active role in spreading evil and corruption upon the face of the earth is known as an adsinistratus (sort of bastardized Latin for “one who follows the left-hand path.”) The adsinistrati are those who wander the world personally corrupting or destroying as they deem fit. Some work primarily in mage society, leading members of the Traditions into the paths of *barabbism*, while others concentrate upon the world of the Sleepers.

Many adsinistrati owe no individual allegiance to anyone Gilledian, nor associate themselves with any particular Labyrinth, though a few have eventually risen in power and influence to equal the might of the Gilledians. Not many, however. The nature of their work makes them ultimately more vulnerable to discovery by Tradition witch-hunters, and to the retributions of Paradox. Consequently, even though the adsinistrati usually play the most pivotal role in the Ascension War, these “point men” have the highest attrition rate of all the Nephandi.

Prelati

(Pray-LA-ti) (Sentinels, Crones/Cronies)

The prelati are the personal assistants, the “left hand men” if you will, to the Gilledians, taking their name from Francois Prelati, the sorcerous assistant to Gilles de Rais (see below.) In the spirit of satanic punnery, however, the name is taken as a Latin plural form, the singular being *prelatus*, or prelate, a designation used in the Christian church.

Prelati are generally the most knowledgeable of all Nephandi, performing scholastic and secretarial duties for the Gilledians. They often serve as sentinels to their Labyrinths as well and are often chosen from the senior members of the

Labyrinth's *barabbi* cabals. The *prelati* conduct the daily affairs of that Chantry, keeping track of important pawns, organizing and placing shaytan troops, settling disputes between cabals, recruiting and dismissing *administrati* and conducting lesser rituals with which their Gilledian leader can't be bothered.

Gilledians

(JAH-LIDD-e-inz)

XVII. *Item, that the said Gilles de Rais, the accused, made a pact with the aforesaid evil spirits, by virtue of which he would do their will; and that by this pact the said accused secured that the same evil spirits would provide him with knowledge, riches and power; thus it transpired, and this is a true rendering.*

—from the Bill of Indictment in the Ecclesiastical Court records of the Trial of Gilles de Rais; also included in the Hermetic and Celestial Chorus editions of *Malleus Neffandorum*.

Those who serve the Nephandi-Lords longest and best, known as Gilledians, are mages of awesome ability. The conditions of their rise to power, however, have bound them closer to their dark masters. It is whispered that many are no more than soulless vessels through which the Nephandi-Lords work their will.

The Gilledian masters a Labyrinth and all Nephandi connected to it. These dark mages rarely leave their Realms, preferring to let their pawns conduct any business that might take them outside the Labyrinth. They primarily spend their time completing or refining the great rituals which will open

the way for their Lords to reclaim the Earth. This need not hold absolutely true for all Gilledians, however. One who has served as a shaytan may be more interested in going out to wage open war upon Tradition and Technocracy strongholds. One who was an *administratus* might wish to slip out and raise a little hell once in a while.

The term Gilledian is derived from the name Gilles de Rais, a fifteenth century Marshal of France and one-time companion of Joan of Arc whose story has become synonymous with the legend of Bluebeard. De Rais, a powerful and wealthy nobleman, used the influence of his position to indulge in some of the most heinous crimes in medieval history. As a successful military commander, he developed a special taste for blood and agony, delighting in the cries and convulsions of the mutilated and dying. In the hidden vaults of his feudal castles, he had a room set aside for the torture and murder of kidnapped local children. He liked to sit on their bellies, laughing and masturbating as they were dismembered or their throats slit. The heads of the most beautiful ones were kept as valued trophies.

With the arrival of the Italian-educated Francois Prelati, de Rais was instructed in infernal magick and directed the energies of his victims toward the invocation of the demon hordes. In time, de Rais' circle of accomplices grew to include Unseelie Faeries, Black Spiral Dancers and their Kinfolk and certain members of the newly formed Sabbat. Eventually, for some unknown reason, these allies turned on him and abandoned him to the tender mercies of the Celestial Chorus. He was tried in a human ecclesiastic court and astonished every-



one by breaking down into fits of sobbing remorse, confessing in detail and begging forgiveness from the parents of his victims. Sleeper historians attribute this behavior to guilt, but mages know that Gilles was terrified by what awaited him beyond the wall of death.

Galarius, Master of Drachus Vachor, is but one of several Gilledians alive today. Few Nephandi of such power exist, but they are rightly feared and hated, even by their own comrades.

Aswadim

(oz-WAH-deem)

The dark and mysterious Aswadim (sing. *Aswad*) can be considered as anti-Oracles for the Nephandi, though they usually take a more active role in the affairs of Nephandi mages than the Oracles recognized by the Traditions. They often act as intermediaries for the Nephandi-Lords and may sometimes even take the role of mentor to instruct a promising *barabbi* in the more perverted uses of magick. The Aswadim inhabit dark reflections of the Shard Realms, called Qliploth.

Six such mages are rumored to exist. No one knows for sure how many there really are, and there aren't many who could find out and live to tell of it.

Allies

Then down the road that leads to hell,

We strode, a merry band —

Sargon, Belshazzar, Jezebel,

Cain with his bloody hand.

— Robert E. Howard, "The Dust Dance"

Acolytes/Cultists

The strongest hold that the Nephandi have upon the physical reality of Earth definitely resides in the human followers that they have cultivated over the centuries. Ever since the Mythic Age, Sleeper devil-cults have been a perpetual, if inobvious, feature of Western civilization. It was in this era that the current Judeo-Christian conception of Satan and Satanism developed, and most Nephandi, charmed by this quaint Sleeper mockery of church services, took up the fashion. Satanism proved to be an effective screen for true Nephandic work and gained them a large number of potential acolytes.

Not all Nephandi acolytes are Satanists, however. The Nephandi are also known to corrupt other mystical sects and cults, secret societies, isolated cultures and mortals who wield great power and influence. Many non-mage Diabolists (see Chapter Four) work directly or indirectly for Nephandi wizards.

Corrupted Lupines

The Nephandus finds natural company with the dark reflections of the Changing Breed, who are ever willing to bring a homid mage to understand the Way of the Wyrms. Malfean Nephandi share much with the Black Spiral Dancers, including their initiatory rituals and Litany. Many even employ the Pictish language for sect communication and ritual.

The Dancers, it is said, travel to an obscene Realm called Malfeas. Favored Nephandi have occasionally made the trip with them. Some few have even danced the forbidden Black Spiral, the secret unholy place of the tribe. This ritual is said to unhinge all but the most powerful mages. The demented K'llasshaa, Nephandi mad even by the Fallen Ones' standards, are reputed to leave their sanities behind in the Malfean Spiral.

One elite group of shaytan assassins, the Circle of Red, has fulfilled many contracts for the Black Spirals and their Pentex allies. One source of extreme friction, however, is Trinity Hive in New Mexico. Rumor among the Nephandi suggests that the so-called Sept of Grandmother Thunderwyrms possesses some kind of mobile earthly Caul. The Sept refuses to allow outsiders into its Pit, even other servants of the Wyrms. The mages have not responded well to this denial. Other oases of corruption, however, are grand examples of cooperation. The Underbelly of the Wyrms, a seething mass of hell beneath Mexico City, is the largest of such joint warrens.

Vampiric Infernalists

Naturally, the Nephandus who allies herself with the demon hordes will at some point have truck with other supernatural creatures who walk the same path, namely the Sabbat Kindred who follow the Path of Evil Revelations. In point of fact, demonic corruption has so permeated that undead sect that most Nephandi consider any member of the Sabbat to be an ally or pawn, regardless of whichever path of "enlightenment" they follow.

Kindred infernalism goes back much further than the formation of the Sabbat, however. Certain fragments of the Book of Nod hint darkly that the bloodline known as the Baali came into being when an unnamed Antediluvian was tricked into embracing a deeply corrupted Nephandus named Baal. Some Nephandi claim that the Antediluvian knowingly and willingly embraced Baal for his or her own purposes. Others tell a more convoluted tale involving stolen vitae and a monstrous Rebirth in the flames of the Inferno itself. The Baali, of course, will say nothing upon the matter, but are ever willing to aid Nephandi in opening the way for the Demon Lords to come and claim the earth.

Fomori and Monsters

Nephandi who follow the will of the Wyrms have been known to breed Fomori in their Cauls, using the carcass of a finely corrupted sacrifice. Fomori are humans who have been warped and reshaped by spirits of corruption into forms most suited for the service of the Wyrms, their bodies crafted into instruments of havoc. Fomori are often possessed by a Bane, or Wyrmspirit, but some still retain some shreds of individual identity.

Monsters which are the earthly spawn of the Wyrms can easily be summoned and (not so easily) controlled by the Nephandi as well. When a suitable portal can be opened (a rare occurrence), monstrous entities inhabiting the outer Fringe Realms may be brought forth to ravage the Earth.



Demons

The Nephandus who plies the path to the Inferno and seeks the company of the demon hordes may find herself subjected to the will of great and terrible masters, but may find reward in the executive powers she wields among those who also serve her master. Most infernal pacts contain a clause enumerating the lesser demons which the infernalist may call upon as servitors.

Magick



Know thou that the darkness of the earth is ruddy, and the darkness of the air is gray, but the darkness of the soul is utter blackness.

— Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*

The Nephandic approach to the working of magick is, naturally, a philosophical inversion of the approach shared by the Traditions, Technocracy and Marauders. Rather than positively asserting a change in reality by one's own will, the Nephandus considers herself to be denying, or negating, some aspect of reality, thereby allowing the will of her masters to rush in to fill the vacuum. For this very reason, the Nephandi are particularly susceptible to Paradox. Nephandi often sport the most grotesque permanent Paradox Flaws, and Paradox spirits have been known to attack Nephandi without any provocation whatsoever. This philosophy of negation pervades their methods of instruction in all the various Spheres and has been referred to collectively as the Qlippothic Tradition, after the inverted Shard Realms of the Aswadim (below).

Much of the Nephandus' strength lies in the fact that any thought, any intention, any point of view, can be so easily perverted and turned from its true purpose. Both Sleepers and Awakened have dark sides to their being and are often blind to the degree of influence which this unconscious shadow can exert upon their conscious behavior. Sleepers in particular possess an almost extraordinary capacity to ignore the broader consequences of their actions. Much of the corruption of human society can be attributed to well-intentioned people so convinced of the correctness of their deeds that they cannot be induced to take responsibility for any negative effects they may have caused. Such negative effects fan the flames of hostility and resentment in other humans and strengthen the collective shadow of the race, making the work of the Nephandus that much easier.

Qlippothic Entropy

The word misspoken. The blow struck in haste. The insult hurled in ignorance. The thought which has wandered astray. These are the banana peels and steel-jaw traps with which we litter the path to Ascension. It all adds up, you see, and one day Gaia Herself will cry out to the Dark Lords to come put an end to her misery.

— Shalavastra, *Euthanatos barabbi*

The Qlippothic understanding of the Sphere of Entropy distinguishes the Nephandi's usage of this Sphere from that of the Euthanatos. The Euthanatos work toward



Ascension and the greater good (whatever the other Traditions may think) by maintaining a balance within reality. Entropy keeps Order from crystallizing itself into dead rigidity and Chaos from tearing everything apart into undifferentiated energy. In this way, the Euthanatos keep the Great Cycles moving.

Clippothic Entropy, on the other hand, is used to ultimately eradicate Order, Chaos and the Balance altogether. It acts upon the world from without, shredding the fabric of reality to open the way for the Dark Lords to enter. Of course, this has never been done in a single act; otherwise, nothing would exist. The Traditions, the Technocracy, even the Marauders, as well as every man, woman, child, animal, vegetable, mineral and base element in the Tellurian, would rather exist than not exist, and their individual efforts, conscious or not, in concert with the forces of Paradox, block the Nephandus at every turn.

Thus, the Nephandus must be subtle and secret in this business of rending the Tapestry: loosen a knot here, unravel these fibers, snip a thread when possible. Eventually, the entire fabric will be so weak that Earth's rightful rulers can no longer be kept out.

Clippothic Entropy Effects

• Common Cause

This mode of perception basically allows a Nephandus to recognize others of its kind and to know when a magickal Effect is being done in the service of the Nephandi-Lords.

•• The Long Arm of Murphy's Law

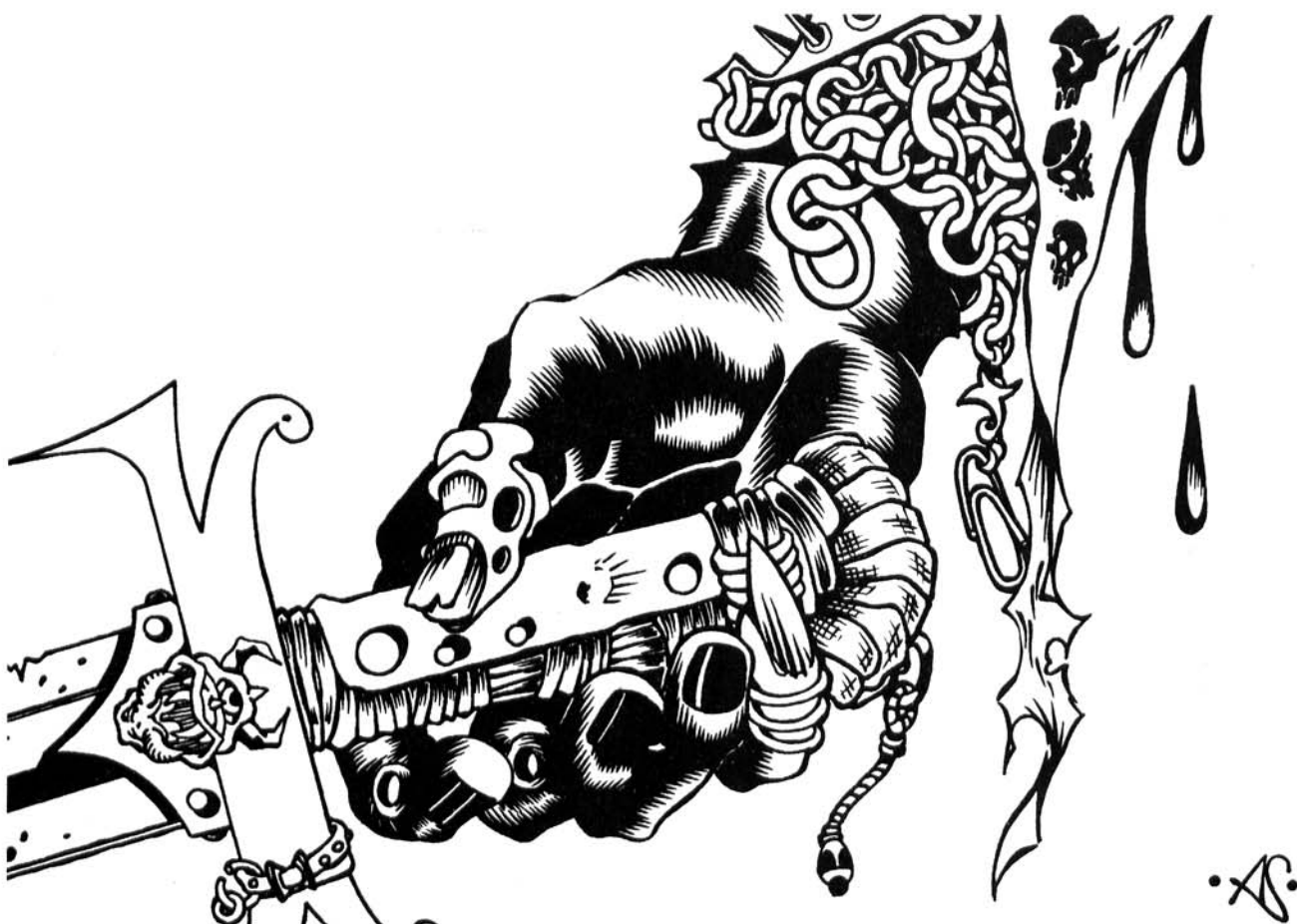
This is the only coincidental-type Effect used extensively by the Nephandi. While it can be directed at an individual target to make that person a temporary "jinx" to those around him, it is more often directed at specific plans and endeavors of the Nephandus' enemies. Each success on the Effect roll means that some minor condition or event required by the plan occurs in a completely counterproductive manner. An Akashic Brother attempting to sneak past a sleeping guard-dog demon might step on a twig with one success, trip over some garbage with three, and step on the damn dog with five.

••• The Sleep of Reason

This Effect causes a sentient being's psyche to fall completely under the sway of its own dark side, or shadow. Virtues become intentions to sin, derangements surface with violent insistence and vampires and werewolves immediately go into Frenzy.

This Effect can be resisted with Willpower, much like invasive Mind Effects (victim rolls her Willpower against difficulty 8; each success subtracts one success from the Nephandus). Mental dodges (see *The Book of Shadows*) may also work if the target knows the attack is coming. The madness induced lasts for the Effect's normal duration. Although it resembles a Mind Effect, *The Sleep of Reason* merely erodes the "better half's" control. Thus, the Nephandus shows the truth behind his philosophy.





•••• The Inheritance of the Flesh

This Effect not only withers life (like the normal Entropic Effect), but covers the victim with boils and pustules which, when burst, spray corrosive pus which infects all living matter it contacts with the Effect as well. Anyone within arm's reach of the victim takes one Health Level of damage for each success the Nephandus scores. This damage is aggravated, but may be soaked. If that victim takes more than four Health Levels, he too become infected with the withering disease.

••••• Obliteration

This Effect is the only known way to make matter or energy completely disappear from all known reality and usually has implusive side effects. Highly vulgar, **Obliteration** does its damage like a direct Entropic attack. If the subject is destroyed by that damage, it ceases to be. Forever. This damage is aggravated, but may be soaked (good thing, too!). Such a powerful Effect can only be used against one target at a time. The normal area modifiers based upon successes do not apply.

Side effects include rips in the Gauntlet, and sometimes in the Nephandus as well (large Paradox explosions). This magick does not work, fortunately, against the Horizon itself. In the Deep Umbra, where no Paradox exists, Masters of Qlippothic Entropy are horrifically powerful. These powerful sorcerers remain one the greatest perils beyond the Horizon.

Talismans

The use of talismans is extremely common among the Nephandi, whose lust for power often exceeds their patience and willingness to learn how to wield power. Talismans are presented to Nephandi who have served well by Aswadim and Dark Lords as rewards, but the true purpose behind such gifts is to lure their servants deeper into evil by giving them increasingly greater tastes of power. Consequently, most younger Nephandi rely upon their Talismans rather than their own innate abilities, a fault which often proves to be their undoing at the hands of more thoroughly educated Tradition mages.

Many of the most powerful Talismans and Artifacts on Earth are of Nephandic origin and are highly prized as battle-trophies by young Tradition mages. Older mages, however, claim that all Nephandi Talismans are cursed and will have nothing to do with them. Never forget that such things were crafted in Dark Realms for corrupt purposes, they say, and only evil can come of them. Storytellers whose players have acquired and use such items are urged to manipulate events in such a way that any activation of a Nephandic Talisman by the players — even in the purest of causes and with the very best of intentions — will ultimately bring about a harmful and destructive result.

Rituals



*At their word, the word that tortures the spirit,
The sick woman was turned into a corpse,
The corpse was hung from a stake...*

— S.N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*

The rituals of the Nephandi are the only way they can contact their masters beyond the Horizon. Thus, the rites themselves comprise a collective purpose all their own which encloses and passes beyond any individual magickal learning itself. The rituals, more than anything else, unite the Nephandi in service to the Dark Lords. In addition, they bind lesser Nephandi to the Gilledians whose Labyrinths contain the Pits where the greatest rituals must be conducted.

Chapter Four has more information about demonic pacts and rituals. The Appendix has rules for summonings and sacrifice.

Sacrifice

While the sacrifice is an essential element of nearly all Nephandi rituals, the amount of Quintessence gained thereby is negligible, except on those rare occasions when a supernatural creature like a vampire or lupine can be offered up. Generally the sacrifice is more a matter of flavor than a source of magickal energy. The demon Tivilio, for instance, requires only that a cat be killed, while the Maeljin Incarna called the Hellbringer is most pleased by the wholesale slaughter of innocent children. A Demon Lord such as Nubarus might prefer the death of a single powerful mage, as long as it is the culmination of an elaborate drama of trust and betrayal.

Summoning

The ultimate goal of all Nephandic activity is to gain entrance into our reality for those who are locked outside of it, those whom the Nephandi serve.

The Dark Lords themselves may only be brought in by a Greater Summoning, which involves the creation of massive gates leading in from the Deep Umbra, massive amounts of Quintessence and vast numbers of sacrifices. Greater Summoning rituals can take centuries to complete and occupy the lives of most Gilledians. The scale and complexity of Greater Summonings means that no such attempt has ever completely succeeded (so far as we know...).

The far more frequent Lesser Summonings are easier to accomplish due to diminished requirements of effort and components (a few do not even require a sacrifice!).

Nephandic Litanies

It is nearly impossible to condense the vast array of corruption, perversion and destruction that comprise Nephandic activity into any single creed, motto or litany. The chants which resound in the ritual Pit

vary from Labyrinth to Labyrinth. Shorter credos range from the classic exhortation to adolescent Sleepers ("Smoke dope. Kill your parents. Buy these records") to the obliquely Iblitic, "Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke." Barabbic litanies generally make use of some inverted version of the doctrine of their original Tradition. Infernalists chants most often take the form of oaths of allegiance to the ruling demons, swearing to further the goals of this or that Demon Lord. Malfeans often use a variant form of the Black Spiral Dancer litany (see *Book of the Wyrms*). Outsider mottoes rarely occur in any known tongue and are impossible for humans to pronounce anyway.

The Rebirth

Oh, the heart in my breast turned stone, and the brain froze in my skull —

*But I won through, I alone, and poured my chalice full
Of horrors and dooms and spells, black buds and bitter roots
From the hells beneath the hells, I bring you my deathly fruits.*
— Robert E. Howard, "Song of a Mad Minstrel"

The Rebirth is central to the Nephandus' existence, as it is the most intimate communion she can have with her master and marks the point of no return on the path of Descension. During Rebirth, the Nephandus-to-be enters the Caul, a special area found only in the most powerful of Labyrinths, where her body and soul are destroyed and recreated in a manner more suited to her master's will. She may emerge with a greater ability to use magick, a stronger body with a greater capacity for destruction or simply a deeper understanding of the Descension which her master represents.

The Entropic Chant

Ironically, the most common of all Nephandic creeds can be found in Sleeper literature in the work of an obscure Texan poet. This is the Entropic Chant taught to new Disciples of Entropy by their Nephandus Mentors. In this Chant, the student identifies herself with all manner of manifestations of Entropy:

*I am the thorn in the foot, I am the blur in the sight;
I am the worm at the root, I am the thief in the night.
I am the rat in the wall, the leper that leers at the gate;
I am the ghost in the hall, herald of horror and hate.
I am the rust on the corn, I am the smut on the wheat,
Laughing man's labor to scorn, weaving a web for his feet.
I am canker and mildew and blight, danger and death and decay;
The rot of the rain by night, the blast of the sun by day.
I warp and wither with drought, I work in the swamp's foul yeast;
I bring the black plague from the south and the leprosy in from the east.*

Nephandic imagery is rife in this poor man's writings. The fact that he ended his own life with a bullet in the brain is indicative of lifelong internal struggles with demons, Banes and other psychic forces from Outside.

The Pact of Gustavius Hanfkopf, Baron of Schroederheim, Adept of the House of Drua'shi, Sentinel of Doissetep, sealed in the year of 1348 at Castle Schroeder.

[This document is written in vulgate Latin from right to left using the blood and skins of unbaptised infants as ink and paper. Found among the ruins of Castle Schroeder two centuries after Hanfkopf departed the earthly plane, it is now kept in a special vault in the library at Doissetep as an example to others.]

We, the Rulers and Potentates of the Realms Infernal, represented by Nubarus, Grand Vizier of the Realms Infernal, and seconded by Baazur-Kalach The Wounder, Ashfurithuge the Drinker of Foemen's Blood from Fresh-picked Skulls, Ephilitim the Accuser and Tivilio the Injurer of Cats, have this day accepted this pact of alliance with Gustavius Hanfkopf, who has seen the wisdom of Our ways and given himself over to the furtherance of Our cause, under such terms as follow:

[here follow, in Hanfkopf's hand, several clauses, of which only a few are printed here as examples]

1. Nubarus, you are bound to deliver to me immediately 100,000 pounds of money in gold.

5. You are bound to instruct me in the arts of magick in such degree that I may in time surpass these fools who call themselves the Grand Hermetic Orders.

17. You are bound to protect me and my household, my acolytes and companion-train from injury, whether domestic or foreign, from theft and from harm.

23. You are bound to see that each and every person shall do my bidding.

In return for these favours, I do swear to deliver into your possession each year seven mortal souls having been separated from their physical vessels under conditions of extreme agony, and that among these seven there shall be both male and female, an infant, a youth, an adult and an elder, and at least one of them being an Awakened one. Furthermore, I do renounce the Church and all its sacraments and all the prayers and petitions by which the faithful might intercede for me, and I do renounce the tenets and oaths of the Hermetic House of Drua'shi, and do swear to do all in my power to hinder their Grand Experiment. And if I shall fail in the conditions of my service, I offer you my immortal soul in forfeit.

Gustavius Hanfkopf. Extractum ex Infernis.

Nubarus, Grand Vizier; Baazurkalach; Ashfurithuge; Tivilio. Sigilla posuerunt magister diabolus et daemones principes domini. Ephilitim scriptor.

While the main purpose of the Rebirth is to corrupt an as yet uncorrupted mage, confirmed Nephandi will often seek to undergo the ordeal again, reaffirming themselves in the eyes of the Dark Lords (and hoping to gain a greater degree of personal power as well.) When conducted in this way, the ritual is known as Regeneration. Many *widderslaite* are fond of these Regenerations.

While the actual experience of Rebirth is ineffable and impossible to describe in words, many theories abound as to what actually happens within the Caul. Most shaytans claim that their heart was torn out and replaced with that of a savage beast. Dreamspeaker *barabbi* say that they were transported to Malfeas itself and made to dance in an antechamber to the great Black Spiral Labyrinth. Infernalists describe a full descent into the Inferno itself, where all the delusions of goodness and light were purged from their souls by the flames of Hell. Iblisites in secret communication with the Batini Qutbs maintained that Rebirth involves lifting the soul out of this dimension, flipping it over and replacing it so that the Reborn Nephandus is the psychic opposite of his former self. (The Iblisites themselves swear that they escaped this psychological reversal by perfectly balancing light and dark consciously within their own souls.)

The Pact

You can have my soul it's a mean little sucker 'bout a thousand years old but once you gets it you can't give it back you gotta keep it forever and that's a natural fact!

— Frank Zappa, "Titties 'n' Beer"

The ritual pact defines the terms of service which the Nephandi-Lord requires of Its servant and states what the Nephandus expects in return. Pacts are used by many Nephandi to some degree, but the chief demons of the Inferno have elevated its usage to a high art form. Infernal pacts most resemble the legal documents which are their Sleeper counterparts, and the demon-lore known to humans is replete with elaborate examples of such agreements. A major point of all such accounts (one which the average Nephandus often forgets in his blind lust for power) is the uncanny knack which the inhabitants of Hell have for finding loopholes and exploiting vaguenesses and generalizations in the language of the pact. Many of the hottest flames of the Inferno are fed with the souls of inexperienced Nephandi who hastily entered into a poorly considered agreement. Attention to details is paramount, and the Nephandus who survives and rises to the rank of Gilledian can often attribute her longevity to some legal training acquired in her Sleeper days.

The pacts of those who serve the Wyrms are rarely as elaborate or as meticulously documented. While the rulers of Malfeas can be every bit as devious as the lords of the Inferno, the powers of corruption at their disposal are so subtle and pervasive that their prospective servants see little need for haggling over terms and definitions. Pacts of alliance with the Wyrms, when expressed at all, are worded simply, boldly and crudely.

Nephandi who ally themselves with the malevolent alien entities of the deepest Umbra seldom have need of pacts at all, as the influence of their masters usually renders them so insane that any kind of verbal definition of their service would be meaningless anyway.

Storytellers using Nephandi as villains in their chronicle are encouraged to come up with some terms of their

villains' pacts. While an extensive written document is not necessary for game purposes, knowledge of certain details of a Gilledian's pact can prove a valuable weapon against an otherwise invulnerable opponent. Such knowledge should never be easily gained by the player characters, however, as the content and physical location of a written pact is always one of a Nephandus' most closely guarded secrets.

Characters



And I was about to answer him: 'The light is within me.' But before I could frame the words, he answered me with the great word that is the Key of the Abyss. And he said: Thou hast entered the night; dost thou yet lust for day?

— Aleister Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*

Acolytes

Jubuka, Chieftain of the Borbor Pygmies

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Fanatic

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intuition 2, Leadership 2, Melee 4, Stealth 5, Survival 5, Cosmology 1, Linguistics (native, Dragon Tongue, English) 2, Lore (Nephandi) 1

Spheres: None, although Jubuka's rituals allow him to call and converse with some evil spirits.

Backgrounds: Allies 3 (the Borbor Pygmies), Arcane 4, Dream 3

Willpower: 5

Background: Life was good for the pygmies of Borboro Island in the Indian Ocean. Fruit, nuts and game were in abundance, while the occasional arrival of a succulent missionary was cause for great feasting. That is, until the coming of the Dark One in his huge black canoe garlanded with skulls and rigged with sails of manskin. Jubuka recognized power when he saw it, and pledged the service of his elite hunters to the Dark One.

Jubuka wants to make a good life for himself and his wives and children. Through the teachings of the Dark One, he has learned about the outside world. Now the stranger has taken both he and his hunters on a hunt through the pale men's world. The air is foul and the ground hard underfoot. The pale gods roar and scream in a thousand voices. The pygmy leader savors the hunt and spits at the pale man's ways, but he has become lonely over time. Jubuka often thinks of home and wishes he were there again.

Image: Jubuka is just under three feet tall, with blue-black skin and a lean wiry frame. He has a round face with an impossibly wide mouth full of pearly white teeth filed to

needle-points. His body is adorned with ritual scars and tattoos, fingerbones braided into his hair, a necklace of tusks, fangs and human teeth and a snakeskin loincloth. He is always accompanied by his hunters, who look just like him only shorter and uglier. All are invariably armed with flint daggers, shortbows and blowguns.

Roleplaying Notes: The Dark One promised your people bright shiny objects and longpork aplenty, so you do his hunting freely and of your own will with much zeal and gusto. The pale-fleshed ones you hunt are easy game, for they are weak and slow-witted with poor senses of hearing and smell. But you have been hunting in this strange land for many seasons now, and wonder when the Dark One will let you return to your family.

When in the land of the tall caves, the Borbor Pygmies often disdain the accommodations provided by the Dark One, preferring instead abandoned buildings, basements, boiler rooms or the less-visited areas of large public parks.



Brugorsch, Watcher of the Pit

Black Spiral Dancer

Essence: Primordial (Metis Theurge; for **Mage** purposes, the collective Avatar of the Lupines is most akin to the Primordial type)

Nature: Autist

Demeanor: Fanatic

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 5, Lore (Wurm) 3

Advantages: Like all Garou, Brugorsch can take several forms, including those of a man, a wolf and a massive in-between form in which Physical Attributes gain an additional +3. Health Levels are regenerated at the rate of one per turn, and damage for biting and clawing are at +1 and +2, respectively. Brugorsch has 4 "Rage Points" which can be spent for an extra action per turn. He can also **Step Sideways** and **Call** corrupted spirits with relative ease.

Backgrounds: Arcane 4, Dream 2

Willpower: 5

Background: Brugorsch was born to and raised by a pack of Black Spiral Dancers inhabiting some of the vilest stretches of the New York City sewers and subway tunnels. Brugorsch grew wise in the ways of the Wurm and its corrupted Bane-spirits. He has assisted many Malfean Nephandi in learning such dark secrets.



Image: Man-form: a shabby disease-ridden derelict; wolf-form: a shabby flea-ridden mongrel; Crinos (intermediate) form: a hulking scabrous brute with doglike head and jaws, huge claws, a broken hairless tail and unsightly tufts of fur.

Roleplaying Notes: You speak rarely and then only to fellow servants of the Wurm. Growl and scratch yourself a lot. Attack all enemies of the Wurm with fervor and gusto.

Sanctum: A filthy rat's nest in a disused semi-collapsed portion of the sewer.



Antonio d'Erlette

Vampiric Infernalist

Essence: Questing (Ninth Generation Tremere *antitribu*; for **Mage** purposes, the viral Avatar of the vampires is most akin to the Questing type)

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Judge

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 2, Firearms 2, Leadership 4, Melee 4, Stealth 3, Culture 4, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 5

Advantages: Antonio's vampiric abilities include telekinetic and pyrokinetic Thaumaturgy (three dots each in The Lure of Flames and Movement of the Mind), 2 additional successes when soaking or using his Strength (Fortitude and Potence), and mental powers akin to Mind 4 (Dominate). He also employs demon-granted Dark Thaumaturgy (see Appen-

dix). Antonio's Paths include The Path of Summoning (Level Three), the Path of Lust and Torment (Level Three) and The Fires of Inferno (Level Two).

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 5, Resources 6

Willpower: 9

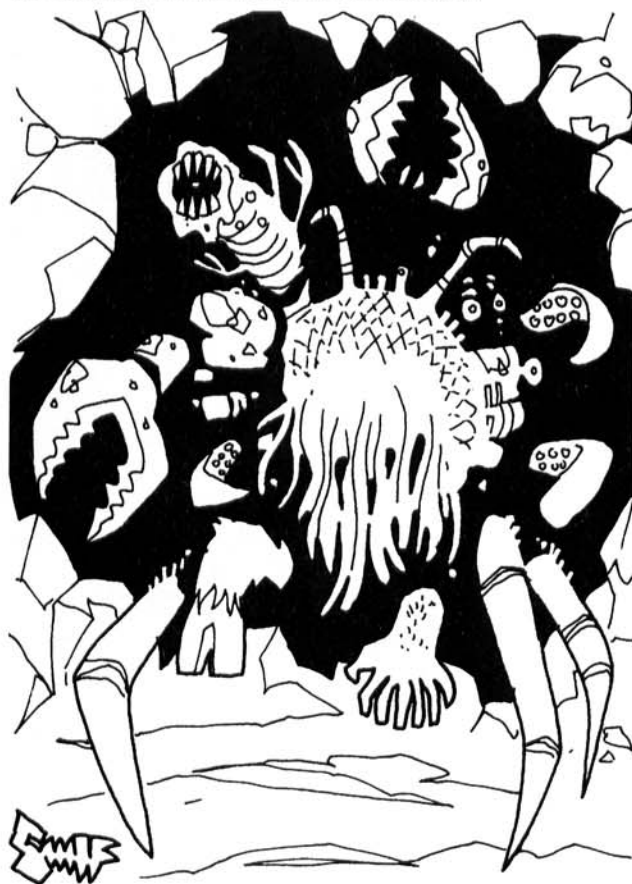
Background: Antonio's sire was a member of the circle of the first Gilledian, the infamous de Rais himself. Antonio's line has always maintained close relations with infernal Nephandi, and Antonio himself has been responsible for many notable recruits to the infernal legions from among the foolish and decadent nouveau riche of many eras.

This vampire is haughty and contemptuous. Despite his Clan's usual behavior, he is not particularly subtle or covert. Instead, he indulges his ego and his ambition to control the European Common Market with blunt words and ruthless temperament. He enjoys dirtying his own hands with his dark pursuits and rarely employs minions for anything he could do himself.

Image: A fine-featured, sharply dressed young man of Mediterranean extraction. His fine Spanish accent adds an exotic air to his insults and dismissals.

Roleplaying Notes: Wear a smug sneer and refuse to be impressed by anything the players do around you. You have been around for centuries and know more of power and evil than they could ever imagine.

Sanctum: Antonio maintains several havens across Europe, as well as in New York and Los Angeles. His havens usually take the form of secluded mansions or well-appointed suites in the most exclusive hotels.



Monster: The Feaster Within

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Perception 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Advantages: Although the Feaster cannot use magick, its method of feeding involves a co-location Effect as Correspondence 4, and the grip of its tendrils can **Wither Life** (Entropy 4). Its effective Arete for these tasks is 4.

The Feaster uses half its normal soak dice against Fire-based attacks.

Willpower: 4

Background: Thought to be related to the Zigg'Rauaglurr, this strange and dangerous monster killed the shaytan who summoned it and is now at large in the world. Though the Feaster possesses no more than the most rudimentary animal intelligence, it can be controlled with Mind 2 and a resisted Willpower roll — as long as it's not too hungry.

Image: An irregular cluster (about four feet in diameter) of anomalous appendages including claws, pincers, humanoid and animal feet, insectoid antennae, crustacean eyestalks, thick sucker-tipped tentacles and thin jellyfish-like tendrils. Its mouth is on the end of a short thick tentacle which extends into the fourth dimension. After grappling its prey (or at least closing in to grappling distance for immobilized or unsuspecting prey), the Feaster sucks out the still-living organs from within, leaving no external wound upon the prey's body. This manner of attack allows it to ignore all armor and even intervening obstacles like walls, as long as the victim is within 2-3 feet.

The Feaster fears light and heat. It hides in chilly basements and abandoned restaurant freezers. Vagrants are its favorite victims. A Progenitor Construct has learned of the creature's existence, but has hushed up the news. They want the Feaster for themselves.

Roleplaying Notes: None. Bon appetit!

Pawn: Seymour Glass

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Conformist

Essence: Questing

Convention: Void Engineer *barabbi*

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Awareness 2, Subterfuge 3, Demolitions 2, Drive 3, Firearms 1, Research 3, Computer 4, Cosmology 3, Science 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 1, Talisman 2

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 1, Forces 2

Willpower: 3

Arete: 2

Quintessence: 1

Paradox: 1

Background: As a child, Seymour liked to gaze up into the night sky and wonder... As a young man, his Awakening and induction into the Void Engineers afforded him the opportunity to penetrate the mysteries of the heavens. Then, one night, the distant and unremarkable star upon which he had trained his instruments addressed him directly with a voice that echoed in the depths of his soul. It promised to unveil greater mysteries than his fellow research assistants could even dream of, and it told him what he must do in return.

Now he spies on his fellow Engineers, spreading a bit of gossip and indulging in minor sabotage. Industrious to a fault, he has been working towards a promotion to one of the outer rim probes or security satellites. Seymour has already worked out a plan to bring something back with him, even if it means his own demise. His body may die, but the star has assured him his mind will live and learn and grow...

Image: A short pudgy white guy in his late thirties, with rounded shoulders, receding hairline, and thick little glasses. Seymour's very unimpressiveness is his greatest asset. No one would suspect him of the things he knows.

Roleplaying Notes: Just go along with whatever anyone says. That is, until you receive your next command from above...

Sanctum: Seymour has a modest cabin in the mountains, away from urban light pollution. There he plumbs the Deep Umbra through his Talisman, an antique telescope. The telescope talks to him at night and sometimes sings him to sleep.

Barabbi: Jodi Blake

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Nature: Director

Essence: Questing

Tradition: *Barabbi* (Tradition unknown)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Acting 4, Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Seduction 5, Sense Deception 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4, Style 4, Ventriloquism 3, Culture 4, Dancing 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Fast Talk 3, High Ritual 1, Meditation 2, Performance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Torture 4, Bureaucracy 3, Computers 1, Enigmas 4, Herbalism 3, History 2, Lores (Kindred 2, Technocracy 2, Traditions 3, Wyrms 1), Investigation 4, Languages (French, Latin, English, Spanish, Cantonese, Dragon's Tongue, Pictish) 5, Medicine 3, Occult 4, Theology 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Arcane 3, Avatar 4, Dream 3, Resources 5

Spheres: Entropy 2, Forces 2, Life 5, Matter 2, Mind 3, Prime 3

Willpower: 7



Arete: 6

Quintessence: 14

Paradox: 4

Background: Jodi Blake's history is unclear at best. Though she has claimed to be *widderslainte* on a few occasions, her usual calling card is renunciation. Depending on the story, she has supposedly defected from the Cult of Ecstasy, Order of Hermes, Celestial Chorus, Verbena, Akashic Brotherhood and even the New World Order. While her skills and magickal ability hint at Verbena or Chorus influence, the truth remains unknown.

Jodi cultivates a youthful appearance but is nearly 600 years old. Though competent in magick, she excels at the mortal skills she's learned over a dozen lifetimes. Her longevity rites are rumored to involve human sacrifice, blood drinking and some hefty demonic Pacts. Few among the Nephandi trust her — she is known as a master of deceit. Her loyalty to her otherworldly masters, however, is unquestioned. Jodi is a "recruiter," a Judas goat for other renunciates.

This Fallen One enjoys all things carnal and cares little for any higher (or lower) goal beyond her masters' wills and her own self-interest. While some consider Jodi a minor threat, those who have met her soon realize that she is a force to be reckoned with. At least 40 mages have fallen prey to Jodi, and no one knows just how many influential Sleepers are hers to command. Even vampires are not immune: several princes supposedly owe her favors.

Combat is not Jodi's style. She prefers her wits and charm over magick. When pressed, she shapeshifts into powerful forms suited for the occasion — a tiger for speed, an eagle for flight, a bull for sheer power. Her cleverness makes her a vicious certamen opponent and she suckers mages into using really vulgar magick when fighting in the material world.

Image: Jodi seldom looks the same twice. She has appeared as a handsome man in his late 30s, a lovely young girl just at the edge of womanhood, a leather-clad seductress with raven hair, a sophisticated and elegant woman in her 50's and even as a young boy of seven. She appears in whatever form she feels is necessary, but in all cases, she is extremely attractive.

Roleplaying Hints: Life is too much fun to be left to mortals. Ideals are shit. You've met few people, mortal or otherwise, who could hold onto their principles under duress. You have an insatiable curiosity about everything, but that curiosity never stops you from doing what must be done.

You are living on borrowed time. Serve your "investors" well, and the party can last for eternity. A long life has taught you what it means to be poor and powerless — never let that occur again. Above all else, you are a manipulator — be everything to everyone. Though you prefer to avoid crowds when possible, you can deal with them when necessary. Some think you're temperamental, but that too is an act. Your real emotions are well under control, or so you believe...



Adsinitratus: Herr Flax

(AKA. Rex, Max, Mordred, Graywolf, Marc and many others)

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Tradition: *Widderslainte* Nephandus

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Carousing 4, Intimidation 3, Seduction 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Dancing 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Leadership 2, Survival 3, Cosmology 4, Culture 3, Lore (Kindred 3, Wyrm 2) Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 4, Avatar 2, Destiny 2, Sanctum 2

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Qliphothic Entropy 2, Life 3, Mind 2, Prime 3

Willpower: 5

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 10

Paradox: 5

Background: Flax claims he was conceived at Woodstock. This is garbage — he's much older than that. All the same, he loves to cultivate a "hip" image in whatever crowd he's in at the time. Herr Flax (who goes by many names) loves youth subcultures, especially the "grunge," death metal, medievalist and fantasy-roleplaying crowds. He once worked at Black Dog Games, but even they found his attitude insufferable.

Bad since his own youth (in rural Iowa, 1936), Flax worked for an eccentric millionaire who owed his fortune to demonic allegiance. The older man's contact, a Nephandus called Byron, saw Flax's ancient Avatar and called it forth, tearing Flax's mind asunder in the process. Though talented, the Rejuvenated Flax showed made a lackluster mage until he stumbled across the Chicago acid culture in the late Sixties. Here, among rock-n-roll rebels, he found his true calling. He's been hopping from group to group, sampling all the drugs, disaffection and cheap sex he can find ever since.

Flax's usual tactic is to pass himself off as either a demon or a rock star (and sometimes both). Once he's impressed his chosen group, he molds them into a cult while playing the Sleepers off against each other. When things are cool, the Nephandus goads his chosen to greater and greater evils. As his "family" falls apart, Flax feeds on their hatred and despair. More often than not, his "friends" commit suicide or kill each other while Flax enjoys the show. His ambitions are not great, but no one can doubt his efficiency. The Black Stone Trinity (see Chapter Four) are Flax' latest converts.

Image: Flax styles himself to look appealing to whatever group he selects, from a Mohawked punker to a blissed-out pagan child. In his favorite guise, Flax has curly red hair past his shoulders, blazing blue eyes, a poet's beard and a runner's build. He stands over six feet tall and drapes himself in duster jackets, Renaissance doublets, torn jeans and obscure band T-shirts. In all guises, Flax makes bad puns and finds everything humorous.

Roleplaying Notes: Such fun! Such pleasure! Such idiots surround you! You could do this all century. The bitterness and alienation around you is like a drug unto itself, but the wonderful fantasies your "families" spin themselves into are an intoxicating contrast to the bland boredom of your own youth. Indulge, indulge, indulge!

You style yourself a counterculture James Bond. Never miss an opportunity for a witty remark or a good lay. Show off, mess with their heads. Use your Correspondence magicks to step around corners or pop out from nowhere. Your flocks are bombed so often that you can get away with more than many mages dream.



Prelatus: Yaqub al-Iblisi

(AKA. Jacob the Iblitite, AKA. Jack Bliss)

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Fanatic

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: Iblitic

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Dodge 2, Intimidation 4, Intrigue 3, Subterfuge 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Leadership 3, High Ritual 3, Meditation 2, Research 2, Technology 2, Chantry Politics (Nephandi) 3, Cosmology 4, Culture 3, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 3, Lores (Garou 2, Kindred 1, Technocracy 1, Traditions 2, Wyrms 3), Occult 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 2, Chantry 2, Node 3, Resources 3

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Qliphothic Entropy 5, Life 3, Mind 4, Prime 4, Spirit 2

Willpower: 7

Arete: 6

Quintessence: 10

Paradox: 5

Background: Once a great Corrupter (they called him "Adsinistratus Primus"), Yaqub has now retired to backstage Labyrinthine intrigues, despite his potential to become a powerful Gilledian. Perhaps his Iblitic origins lost him the trust of other Nephandi. Perhaps his grotesque Paradox flaws have sapped his confidence and ambition. Or perhaps it has something to do with the fact that, through a tangle of circumstances nobody understands, Yaqub has somehow managed to convince three different unassociated Nephandi-Lords that each one has an exclusive claim to his eternal and indivisible soul.

Image: Although he goes covered in heavy cloaked robes and a veiled turban, there are still a few Paradox deformities Yaqub cannot completely hide: his left eye is a bright electric green, the other primer gray; his right hand has three fingers, his left has seven. Underneath his robes and turban, Yaqub sports a black multi-lobed third eye, a 12" forked tongue, legs like a chicken's and a broad variety of teratonic growths including mouths, eyes, hair, animal and alien appendages too malformed to be useful and a fully formed catfish face on his left inner thigh which has recently begun to murmur semi-intelligible sounds. Yaqub can, for brief infrequent periods, take the form of his youth, that of a beautiful Persian lad on the cusp of manhood.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a deep cover agent who can't quite remember which side you're really on. When dealing with player characters, try to convince them that you will betray the Nephandi for them. If they don't trust you, do it yourself in some potentially self-destructive way that'll make them feel really sorry. If they do trust you, deliver the fools to their doom!

Sanctum: Yaqub maintains Batini-style private quarters which are co-local with his current Labyrinth and a few hidden locations in urban centers around the world, through which he can supply his Paradox-imposed diet of cancerous tumors and late-term abortions.

Dark Masters

Cross cutting thunder charge
Blade of destruction
Flame throwing hurricane
Destroys the cage
— Judas Priest, "All Guns Blazing"

Demons

Numerous demons, including Nishama, an Imp of the Perverse with a special relationship to the Nephandi, are presented in Chapter Four.



Al-Aswad, The Black Man

Ancient Nephandus

Nature: Avant-Garde

Demeanor: Critic

Essence: Primordial

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 7, Charisma 8, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 4

Abilities: Awareness 7, Brawl 4, Cosmology 9, Culture 5, Enigmas 8, Etiquette 3, Expression 6, Intuition 5, Intimidation 9, Leadership 9, Melee 7, Occult 10, Stealth 6, Subterfuge 8

Backgrounds: Arcane 7, Avatar 9, Destiny 8, Dream 5

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 6, Forces 5, Life 4, Matter 4, Mind 4, Prime 4, Spirit 5, Time 5

Willpower: 10

Arete: 9

Quintessence: 10

Paradox: 10

Background: Al-Aswad is believed to have been the first Nephandus and was the first to Descend to the Qlippoth of Entropy (thus all the anti-Oracles take their formal title from his name). He is known in human lore as the "black man" who is said to preside over Satanic ceremonies, "witches' sabbats" and the like. In this capacity, he carries a large book containing the names of those who have consigned their souls to the Devil. Al-Aswad maintains close contact with all Labyrinths, monitoring the activities of the Gilledians. He also occasionally walks the world acting as *adinistratus*, at which times great doom is said to follow close at his heels.

Image: A tall, gaunt man entering middle age, with jet-black skin and vaguely Egyptian features. Al-Aswad may at times take other forms as well, including a black jackal, a cat with depthless eyes, an albino vulture and a shifting form that strikes viewers mad (Willpower roll verses difficulty 9 or enter an eighth level Quiet (if a mage), frenzy (if a vampire or werewolf), or screaming insanity (if a Sleeper).

Roleplaying Notes: Distant, aloof and eternal, you have been here since the beginning, making certain that the world is made ready for the advent of its true masters. Certain mortals can gain your attention, but none may gain your confidence or trust (though some may believe that they have).

Sanctum: Al-Aswad's abode in the Qlippoth of Entropy is the Dark Cathedral of Uzhuvrath, a crumbling quasi-gothic ruin of enormous size perched on a craggy precipice overlooking the Black Pit of Unfathomable Foulness, a bottomless chasm somehow linked to the Abyss (described in the Werewolf sourcebook *Umbra: The Velvet Shadow*).

Malik Harjaq, Master of Mayhem

Maeljin Incarna

Background: As Master of Mayhem, the Malik has been one of the busiest of the increasingly occupied Maeljin Incarna. Harjaq is responsible for riots, barroom brawls, gang warfare, playground free-for-alls, the more mindless of the atrocities of war and eruptions of violence among fans at sporting events and rock and roll concerts.

Harjaq can travel the Umbra at will and has vast legions of Banes at his command. His true power, however, resides in the infectious nature of violence and the mindless psychology of the mob. His very proximity is often enough to set good friends to blows.

Image: Harjaq resembles a Viking berserker with many arms sprouting from his huge barrel-chest. Each arm wields some kind of improvised weapon like chains, pool cues, 2x4s, crowbars, beer mugs, frying pans, shovels, steak knives, pickaxes, ballpeen hammers, gardening equipment, table



legs, sticks and stones. His arrival in the Umbra is heralded by a massive explosion of blood and entrails.

Because of the godlike power of Incarna, Harjaq has not been given game statistics. This malevolent spirit cannot materialize in the physical world (thank the gods!). He will, however, manifest in chosen individuals from time to time. Such avatars of hatred will gain Brawl and Melee Abilities of 5 and can ignore Health Level penalties until they die. Characters encountering Harjaq in the Umbra are advised to flee.

Roleplaying Notes: While you never miss an opportunity for senseless bloodshed, you are still capable of more subtle pleasures, such as the age-old game of let's-you-and-him-fight ("Do you know what I just heard him say? Are you gonna let him talk to you like that? If I were you I'd smash his face in!")

Sanctum: The Malik's duchy in Malfeas is the landscape of the riot: broken glass, burning cars, corpse-strewn streets with gutters and drains scabbed over with blood.

Aadschlaggha, Crawler in the Pit at the End of All Worlds

Outsider Thing

[Note that the stats provided here merely refer to an example of a major manifestation of Aadschlaggha, whose true form is too incomprehensibly vast and remote to ever be encountered directly]

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Fanatic

Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 1, Stamina 10, Charisma 0, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

Abilities: Brawl 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 6, Survival 8, Cosmology 2, Enigmas 2

Backgrounds: Dream 7, Avatar 6

Advantages: Aadschlaggha's manifestations may sense all aspects of reality (like the Rank One Effects of all nine Spheres), **Shift through Space**, invade another's dreams (Mind 3) and heal (Life 3) at will. The effective Arete for these Effects is 4.

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -3, -5, -5, slagged.

Background: When the Pure Ones first set to weaving the Tapestry of the Tellurian, They were like children playing random games with the raw ways of being, tangling threads of Prime into twisting knots of polar charges: light and dark, order and chaos, time and space. Some of these knots were so highly charged that they pulled in unto themselves, looping into infinitely hot dense realms which strain at the fabric of reality, sucking up any loose threads of Quintessence.



When the patterns of the Realms of Gaia were completed, the myriad beauties of Her Spheres, Her lands and Her lives fulfilled the center of the Tapestry, while the failed experiments of the knot realms clung to the Outer Fringes of being, clenched in the naked warp and weft of time and space. But even within these oppressively tiny realms, consciousness had taken root (some Nephandi say these were the first Pure Ones to go insane, seeking to unravel the complexities of their failures and binding themselves in the process) and dark eyes opened in Awakening and turned to the distantly shining realms of Gaia.

Image: Aadschlaggha is most often encountered in dreams. There, it appears as a huge toad-like face emerging from a pit or dark passage, compelling the dreamer to undertake the foul and arduous ritual for opening a portal to Aadschlaggha's Fringe Realm through which Aadschlaggha may secrete a portion of its substance onto the Earth. This takes the form of a droplet of impossibly heavy white-hot slag which burns a hole through the Earth's crust and seeps quickly to the center of the planet.

If, however, Aadschlaggha's secretion manifests near a Node or other powerful Quintessence supply, it will cool and swell and congeal into a living embodiment of the Dark Lord itself: a gelatinous metallic-skinned amoeba which can extrude slug-like eyestalks, appendages and a hooded eyeless toad-face. Such an incarnation will quickly suck a smaller Node dry and sink into the ground as slag when no more Quintessence can be found. Manifestations at major Nodes, however, often become the guardians of strongholds from which powerful Labyrinths may grow.

Roleplaying Notes: You have seen the very breath of your being stolen from you to infuse the Shining Realms with life. But you have learned to reach the inhabitants through the shadows of their minds, enticing them with power-promises of the vast Forces exclusive to your realm. Through their invitations you deposit your own superdense flesh into the heart of the Realms, increasing their "mass" and straining the Tapestry until it will eventually be possible to contract your hypergravitic muscles and swallow the Tellurian whole.

Sanctum: With the advent of orbital telescoping, the Void Engineers may have pinpointed Aadschlaggha's knot-realm in the Deep Umbra. Radio-astronomical data from NGS-989Z/9N, a very distant, very massive neutron star, has been resolved to clearly show an amorphous but cohesive shape crawling across the star's surface, often eclipsing large portions of the star's radiographic profile.

Talismans

••• Whispering Stone

Arete 3, Quintessence 15

This insidious object resembles a small stone, shell or crystal and is often given as a gift. The Stone sits silently for a certain period of time, then begins to "whisper" telepathically to the person to whom it is keyed. These voices will invariably feed whatever insecurities and doubts that person may have until the Stone is removed or the target either leaves the area, goes mad or dies.

The whispering is created by a Mind 3 Effect which reads the subject's thoughts and responds accordingly. This power is fueled by a Prime 2 Effect which consumes one Quintessence a day. After this reserve runs dry, the voices will end. Most people won't last that long. Coincidental Effect.

•••• Lash of Passion

Arete: 6, Quintessence: 20

This potent little item was bestowed upon Herr Flax by Lucricia the Succubus in gratitude for some hellish favor. He rarely uses it, but keeps it safe at home just in case...

Used normally, the Lash does Strength + 1 with a difficulty of 7, and can be used to grab objects or grapple an opponent (or a lover...) at difficulty 8. Its magical powers are as follows:

Mind 1: Grasping the handle of the lash instills the holder with self-confidence and a sense of superiority. Coincidental Effect.

Mind 2: Damn, that felt good! The touch of the whip is distinctly pleasurable, although damage and ensuing pain occur normally. Repeated use of the lash upon a single target, however, eventually embeds two ideas in the target's mind. First, that pain really is pleasure, and second, that inflicting pain on others is good fun for all. This mindset lasts for the length of the Effect's duration, although it may be resisted with Willpower. Coincidental Effect.

Entropy 3: The lash can be used to slice through hard materials (damages as a normal **Destroy Matter** Effect). Vulgar Effect.

Entropy 4: When used as a conventional melee attack in conjunction with a certain command word in the Dragon's Tongue, the lash causes a wound which will quickly fester and begin to spread across the victim's body if not magically healed. In addition to regular damage, the victim loses one Health Level per day unless healed. Three successes on the attack roll allows the attacker to selectively disable a limb in two turns. Really vulgar Effect.



Storyteller Hints

Nephandi are mysterious, seductive and thoroughly corrupt. Storytellers should avoid giving in to the traditional "Booga Booga, I'm a black-clad evil wizard" portrayal. While some Nephandi doubtless live up to all the worst stereotypes, most are subtle by necessity. The corruption they crave thrives on dissent, doubt, greed, repression, hatred — in short, the darkest elements of the human soul. Next to sparking a genocidal flame war in the Net or slowly converting a hubris-ridden Progenitor Administrator, carving up babies is for amateurs.

The Fallen Ones should remain distant and enigmatic lures to the mages they oppose. By the time the Forbidden Horrors start spewing from the woodwork, any Nephandus in your Chronicle should have already established a reputation far beyond his or her powers. The key element in horror is uncertainty. Never let the Nephandi become simple "mad cultists" or evil high priests. These roles are too predictable to be truly frightening. Fallen Ones use misdirection, distrust, innuendo, scare tactics and power-lust to win over or destroy their foes. Why risk harm when you can get your enemies to defeat themselves?

The wild K'llasshaa are an exception to this rule, but they ought to be frightening through sheer self-destructive psychosis. A mage who will do *anything*, without regard for his own safety, can be damned scary in small doses. All the same, kamikaze squads of evil wackos quickly get old. Save the banzai charge as a last resort.

Favored Nephandi Tactics

- **Stalking:** The mage haunts her victim, using coincidental magicks to foul up his life. Odd sounds, strange visions just out of sight, nasty pranks and subtle Mind Effects can drive a mage into panic, Quiet or deep paranoia.

- **Temptation:** The most obvious but most subtle form of corruption. Simply walking up to someone, announcing you're a Nephandi and asking them to join the party is rarely successful. Celestial mages, Hermetic wizards and Akashic Brothers are most vulnerable to this tactic, as they repress many inner desires. Most Verbena and Cultists of Ecstasy can see tempters coming a light-year away and seldom fall victim to them.

- **Rumor-mongering:** Slandering a mage's name in high places or feeding inter-cabal rivalries are highly effective ways to hamstring your opposition. Such rumors are always passed on "for your own good" and rarely require magick to get the job done. The Fallen One merely starts a small fire, sits back and laughs...

- **Dream-breaking:** A more extreme form of stalking, this magickal invasion of the victim's sleep is a favored method of Malfean Nephandi. By planting disturbing visions and night terrors, the mage keeps his quarry awake until either exhaustion, neurosis or Quiet sets in.

• **Random Assaults:** Guerrilla attacks by nightmare beasts are a good way of keeping your victim paranoid while wearing her down for the *coup de grace*. Shaytans favor this approach, especially in Horizon Realms and the Near Umbra where the Paradox risk is minimal. These assaults are usually carried out by allies unless the Nephandus is either really strong or really stupid.

• **Framing and Infiltration:** Dracus Vachor's Watchers of the Void are masters of this tactic. The Fallen Ones, usually *barabbi*, appear as friends and assist their prey long enough to win their trust. They then undermine the quarry's work, reputation and ideals by impersonating her, gossiping to her comrades or playing up to her pride. When the inevitable revelation comes, the victim is usually in far deeper trouble than the Nephandi themselves.

• **The Brutal Truth:** See "Vultures" in the beginning of this book for this tactic in action.

Detecting Nephandi

Many Fallen Ones have a mark of some kind — a stained aura, an unnatural birthmark, a sinister air — visible to those who know what to look for. A Mind 3 **Mental Link** is the most obvious way to spy a Nephandus, but most Fallen Ones can counter this Effect with their own magicks or will. Most *widderslainte* can be detected by their corrupted Avatar. Perception + Awareness rolls against the mage's Willpower or Arcane rating might detect such an Avatar.

Many Technomancers have Devices that scan for high concentrations of Entropy (Euthanatos, beware!) or corrupt Avatars (Mind 3, Prime 2, Spirit 1). Unless a Nephandus wanders into range, however, the likelihood of detecting one is slim. Lesser Nephandi can escape detection with ease. More powerful ones, however, attract trouble and evil spirits and seem so otherworldly that even Sleepers catch on. These sorcerers prefer their own Realms to the hidebound Earth.

Nephandi Player Characters

Because of the powerful, mysterious and evil ways of the Fallen Ones, Storytellers are advised against allowing players to choose Nephandi characters. If your players insist, however, remember that these corrupters are universally hated and eventually damned. They rarely trust even each other. Tradition and Technocracy mages will almost *never* cooperate with Nephandi for any length of time, and would not *ever* allow one into their cabal (let alone their Chantry!). Remember, too that the inherent appeal of darkness is its mystery. Reducing this mystique to a power-gamer's fantasy is a disservice to your Chronicle.

Given the doomed and anti-moral nature of these mages, the roleplaying possibilities go far beyond simple "kill 'em all" blood feasts. Nephandi are, in their own way, following a Path every bit as valid as their counterparts. Explore, if you must, what evil really means. Why would a mage choose such a hated Path? What ideals does he still hold? What effect has the Rebirth had upon his personality? Can he interact at all with normal Sleepers? If not, what does he do when he must? Do his actions (and imminent damnation) frighten and torment him? If not, they should...

Don't let Nephandi characters get away with murder. The Fallen Ones have a massive price on their collective heads, and plenty of beings (including their own allies) want to collect. A Nephandi Chronicle, should you wish to run one, will probably be solitary, unpleasant, nasty, brutish and short. It might, however, be fun in a sick sort of way. Whether you want this kind of fun is up to you.

Common Nephandi Traits

Most Fallen Ones have high Physical and Social Attributes. Combat skills are common, but Subterfuge, Intimidation, Enigmas and Occult are almost required. Entropy is their strong suit, followed by Forces, Prime, Mind, Spirit and Life. Strong Avatar, Mentor, Familiar or Arcane Backgrounds are typical. Common Merits and Flaws include Dark Secret (or Fate), Nightmares, Obsession, Hatred, Companion, Strangeness, Echoes, Curse, Primal Marks, Haunted and any number of Ties.



Chapter Two: Paradox

*"Reality" is the only word in the language that should
always be used in quotes.*

— My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult, "Nervous Xians"



Toward what he guessed would be the end of his life, Vittorio Leonardi, whose initiatory name in the Order of Reason was Frater Icaro, made one final attempt. This time it would work, of this he was certain. He had perfected the design of his armature: a single-passenger device which could duplicate all the motions of a flying bird. He was old and frail, but the lightness of his body was an asset in this case. A stolen Verbena

potion would lend him the strength he required. Advice from his mentors in the Order of Reason precluded any Sleeper involvement. Someday soon, that would change, but not yet.

From a remote cliff high above the Adriatic shoreline, he bellowed a challenge to the sky. The rough surf roared far beneath him. The sun watched silently far above. He filled his lungs and spread the wings of his armature, feeling the wind kick up.

He stepped off the ledge and into empty space.

The drop was vertiginous, stomach-churning, but the resolute fixity of his mind swept all fear aside. Expertly angling his wings against the air, he caught it and rode the momentum of his plummet out and up, swooping away from the cliff face a full twenty feet above the spray of the waves churning against the rocks on the shore.

With a powerful sweep of his skinny arms, he flapped the wings of his device, gaining altitude. Soon the cliff itself was far below and behind him, shrinking as he rose on the wind like a bird. Far ahead, a ship had become visible upon the horizon of the sea, too far away to be witness to his triumphant transgression against the "laws of nature."

And then the sun was in front of him, impossibly close. Squinting against its brilliance, he imagined that he saw, in the burning afterimage on the back of his eyelids, a face ancient and withered, with long white hair and beard. A face not too terribly unlike his own.

A face which filled the sky before him when he opened his eyes again.

From beneath the bearded face, falling like sunbeams through clouds, extended a body of light draped in shining robes. And from that body there arose toward him an arm, incredibly long, lifting an incomprehensibly huge hand to bar his way, huge forefinger cocked menacingly behind massive thumb.

"NOT YET, CHILD!"

And then sea and sky and land were reeling dizzily around him, enveloping him within his armature with the sickeningly familiar sound of snapping wood and cables, tearing canvas, the sound of a lifetime's failure.

And Icaro fell.

And fell.

And kept on falling for the next four or five hundred years.



What is Paradox?



In plain English, Paradox results from the clash of realities.

While the theories behind Paradox vary, the core principle is simple: Magick is essentially the art of replacing one reality with another. If these two realities drastically contradict each other, a paradox occurs. If one reality states that a man can fly and one says that he can't, the two realities clash. The strongest reality wins.

Small contradictions cause small paradoxes. The greater the difference between the realities, the larger the Paradoxical effect will be. A mage's strength is his or her force of will and belief in his or her ability to change reality. Any doubt or hesitation on the part of the mage (a botch) will cause the Paradox effect to rebound upon that mage. Even without doubt, some conflict always occurs.

The Bubble

The classic metaphor of reality as water says: "Magick is like an air bubble. When it appears, it displaces a little water. A big bubble displaces a lot of water. Given time, the bubble will shrink, and the water will flow back into place. Sometimes the bubble breaks. Then you're screwed!"

Reality as we know it is a large body of water. The dynamic reality-wrenching of True Magick disturbs that water to some degree. Even the Marauders stir the water; they simply wear deep sea diving suits to protect them from the shock.

Picture Paradox as ripples in the water. Some ripples are pretty small, others are huge waves that wash everything away. Even if the bubble does not break, a gradual buildup of such ripples will affect the mage's local reality and pattern, becoming Paradoxes unto themselves. These Paradox Flaws become localized disruptions until the conflict is resolved. This sometimes takes months or even years.

Either way, the water will settle. The mage who causes the least displacement of this water comes out ahead.

Origins and Theories of Paradox



Primitive man impresses us so strongly with his subjectivity that we should really have guessed long ago that myths refer to something psychic. His knowledge of nature is essentially the language and outer dress of an unconscious psychic process. But the very fact that this process is unconscious gives us the reason why man has thought of everything except the psyche in his attempts to explain myths. He simply didn't

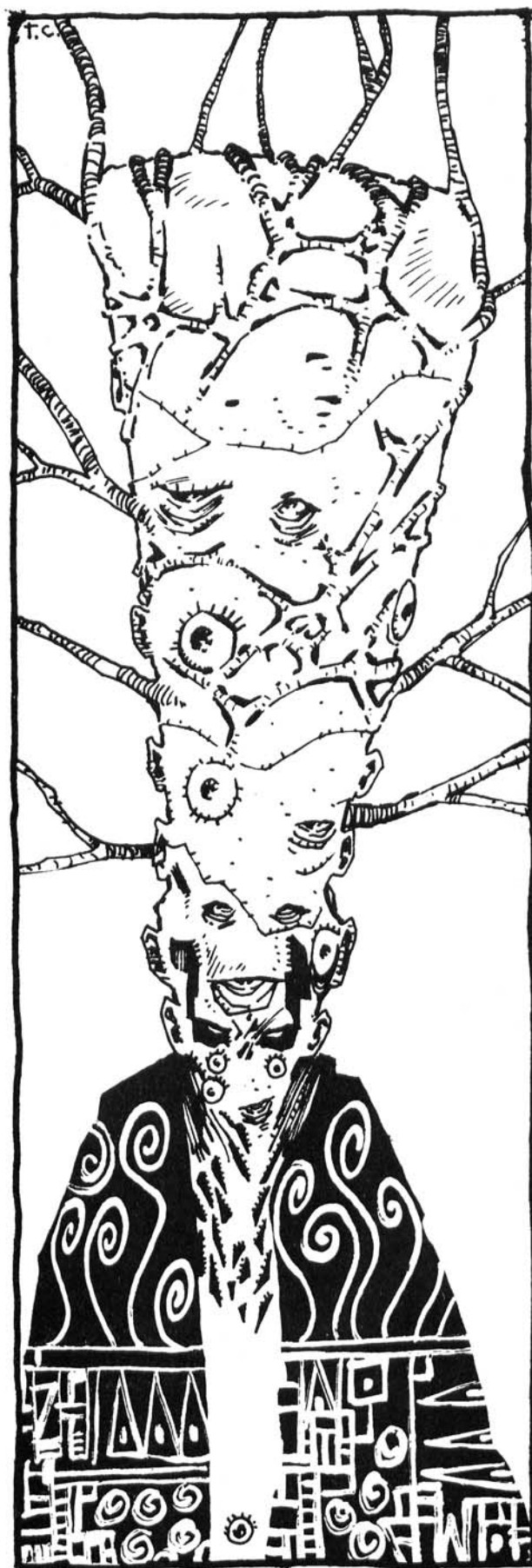
know that the psyche contains all the images that have ever given rise to myths, and that our unconscious is an acting and suffering subject with an inner drama which primitive man rediscovers, by means of analogy, in the processes of nature both great and small.

— C. G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*

The ontology of Paradox is dimly understood, even by the Oracles themselves. There are vague speculations regarding the manner whereby the Pure Ones brought existence into being out of nothingness. Some believe that Paradox arose from disputes or even wars among the Pure Ones over what form reality might take. This conflict was what eventually led to the Pure Ones fragmenting themselves and burying their splintered essences deep within their creation as the Sleeping Avatars of humanity. According to this school of thought, Paradox was set up as a deliberate hindrance to Ascension, "for the harder one's journey, so much sweeter the destination." Others go further to say that Paradox was spawned from the Void as reaction to the Pure magick of Creation, but this school of thought has been linked to the Nephandi and is generally dismissed as a lie of the Fallen Ones.

What little can be said with certainty comes from the oldest legends of the Dreamspeakers. In the earliest of times, they say, the threads of the Tapestry were woven loosely enough to be manipulated with relative impunity. Gaia was still warm from the cooking-fire (as they put it) and had not cooled enough to form the brittle crust now called static reality. The Gauntlet had not yet been placed between matter and spirit, and life was still close enough to its Velvet Shadow to be aware of its myriad possibilities.

Among the people of this time, the Awakened were more closely bound with their communities — healers, medicine men, wise ones or shamans. These primal mages seldom took positions of temporal leadership, but were still in effect the psychic leaders of their tribe's collective imagination, for it was through their visions that their



people's beliefs and understanding of the world was shaped. Thus the mage shaped the belief of her people, whose belief in turn shaped the world in which they lived. No distinction was made between the dynamism of magick and the stasis of reality, and acts which would now be considered dynamic or vulgar magick were merely viewed as a normal, but nonetheless spectacular, part of the shaman's work.

As humanity was much closer to its spiritual nature at this time, the specific beliefs of individual tribes became personified as protective tribal spirits, part of whose function was to ensure the stability and coherence of reality to keep it in accord with the tribal belief system. This implicit function was rarely brought into play, as relatively little communication took place between tribes. Interaction usually took the form of conflict, and the tribal protectorate-spirits fought in the Umbra just as their people fought on earth.

The Cooling of the Crust: Static Reality

Anything done for the first time creates a demon.

— Dave Sim

By the dawn of the agricultural revolution, the magickal topography of the Earth was one of extremes, with separate spheres of influence defined by regions of small populations sharing a common view of reality. Travel between regions demanded deep self-adjustments on the part of the Awakened who undertook such a journey. Forms of magick which could be easily accomplished on one side of the mountain were countered with extreme resistance on the part of the tribal spirits on the other side of the mountain. The frontiers between these regions were zones of intense dynamism and near-limitless potentiality. It is believed by some that the earliest Marauders were mages who inhabited these zones, either through tribal ostracism, Orphanage or simply by choice.

With the advent of agriculture and the decline of the hunter-gatherer tribes, static reality as we now understand it began to come into being. The new lifestyle of the farmer demanded a stability and regularity beyond that which the hunter required of his world. The old protector-spirits were either replaced by or transformed into spirits which could be counted on to maintain the cycles of the earth upon which agriculture depends. The idiosyncratic traits of the hunter became the common concerns of the farmer.

Also contributing to the formation of static reality at this time was the increase in travel and communication between different regions. As ideas were exchanged, beliefs regarding the nature of reality were mixed and melded, and a common world-view emerged. Spirit guardians once set against each other in tribal wars now became united in the preservation of the new system, and the world shaped itself in accordance with the new, broader version of What Must Be.



With this new kind of existence leveling the magickal topography of the world, the Awakened found that their relationships with their Sleeper communities were undergoing dramatic, irrevocable and often catastrophic changes. The mage as the avant-garde dynamic presence, the spearhead of novelty in the world, had no more place in a society which demanded only that the sun rise and set on time and that the seasons of the earth pass in due course. Of course, many of the Awakened were perfectly willing to take up this duty and reaped no small benefit from the choice they made. It is no coincidence that most of the Technomantic Conventions trace their magickal lineage to those mages who chose to remain culturally integrated during this era.

Those mages who chose not to integrate quickly found themselves at odds with the emerging static reality. As the worldview spread, they were pushed farther and farther out of the mainstream of human society, a trend which has continued to escalate even to the modern day. Human culture lost its use for dynamic pyrotechnics and came to see such activity as threat to its stable lifestyle. Static or coincidental magick was virtually unknown (except to the agriculturally attuned proto-Technomancers), and the new belief system demanded that threats to its stable way of life be punished as transgressions against the natural order of the world. Just as the old tribal spirit guardians acted against those who intruded from outside the tribe, so did the new spirits of the agricultural paradigm move to protect the stasis of their re-created world. Thus the function of the old tribal totems was taken over by the inscrutable enforcers of the static paradigm.

The Present

Though accepted by many magickal historians, this theory explains very little about modern Paradox. Some point to the Mythic Ages as refutation of this version of history, but others claim that they illustrate this view of Paradox perfectly. A Mythic Age resulted, they say, when one Tradition or another had gained sufficient influence within Sleeper society to shape the collective beliefs or paradigm of that region and era into something a bit closer to their ideal. When a substantial majority of Sleepers has accepted a particular kind of magick into their view of how the world works, Paradox then deems it as "allowable;" that is, it does not constitute enough of a disruption of the Tapestry to warrant reprisal. The most well-known example is, of course, the Mythic Age of Europe, wherein the Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes each gained some degree of ascendancy. The Akashic Brotherhood was responsible for a long succession of Mythic Ages in Asia, but each time abandoned the outward Ascension of worldly power for the inner Ascension of mystic contemplation.

The Technomantic ascendancy during the Age of Reason was no doubt aided by their long tradition of cultural integration. The Order of Reason realized that Paradox conforms itself to the expectations of large numbers of Sleepers, and bent itself to the task of convincing large numbers of Sleepers that the universe worked along linear mechanistic laws of cause and effect — in other words, the Technomantic style of magick.



Until fairly recently, technology, not magick, found itself on the receiving end of Paradox. Of course you can fly, said the average person, if God or the Devil wills it. That *contraption* over there will get you nowhere! It was only through sufficient acts of will, backed up by decades of “discoveries” and “facts” that allowed airborne machines to fly. Most early technology either malfunctioned or refused to work at all.

Most mages agree that the universe always made a certain degree of objective sense. Certain perimeters have always existed. What these boundaries might be is open for debate, but the form of the universe does have limits. These can be viewed as the dreams of the unknowable immortals who predate humanity or even organic life itself. Such immortals — God, Gaia, Celestines, the Pure Ones, immu-

table laws of physics, or however one chooses to view them — set certain “laws of nature” as constants. Mages have argued for centuries about the shape of the Earth or the rotation of the galaxies: were such things random and formless before someone observed them and set their form? Or did they take their current substance before the first humans ever breathed? Who else might have observed them? Did they set the Earthly paradigm or did we? How firmly is it set? It’s an endless “If a tree falls...” argument, but all signs indicate that the tree does, indeed, make a sound.

Creation, then, is an ongoing process. Magick is the evolution of reality and mages the *agents provocateur*. While immortal will may keep the universe in balance, gods and physics are notoriously unreliable. And when the immortals go mad, reality is up for grabs.

Metaphysics



If we ask whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say ‘no’; if we ask whether the electron’s position changes with time, we must say ‘no’; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say ‘no’; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say ‘no’. The Buddha has given such answers when interrogated as to the conditions of a man’s self after death.

— Robert Oppenheimer

The study of Paradox is the study of circles and cycles. The idea that reality is nothing more than a function of consciousness has entered into Sleeper paradigms through the actions of the Technocracy itself, much to its own chagrin. Quantum physicists have realized that the mind shapes the world and have proven as much through empirical mathematical equations and rigidly controlled experimentation. The Conventions have blamed this metaphysical “security leak” on the Sons of Ether, but the concept is much older.

This idea was first and most eloquently expressed by the ancient sages whose wisdom formed the cornerstone of the Akashic Brotherhood. It was preserved in the doctrine of Unity by those Akashic offshoots, the Ahl-i-Batin, who in turn claimed authorship of the Arabic texts which formed the Traditional basis for the Sons of Ether. Many quantum physicists have experienced partial or full Awakening through their work, and a great majority of these have become acolytes or initiates to the Akashic Brotherhood.

The metaphysics of Paradox may be as simple or as complex as any individual Storyteller desires. For some, Paradox may simply function as a restraining factor to contain the broader rampages to which player characters might be prone, preserving the human side of the World of Darkness. The Masquerade fulfills this purpose in *Vampire*, as does the Veil in *Werewolf*. This is not meant to bind the players into the

role of ineffectual spectators, but to keep normal everyday human society from crumbling through perpetual confrontations with the vast and unthinkable supernatural ecology which encompasses it. The World of Darkness needs the waking mortals’ world of light in order to define itself.

A more satisfying way to think of Paradox is as a kind of Newtonian inertia in the fabric of reality. “Objects which have always existed in a certain way tend to continue to be that way unless acted upon by sufficient magickal force,” states the First Hermetic Law of Motion. For every magickal action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

This approach to Paradox is best illustrated in a story told of Nichiba the Weaponless Defender. In his younger days, Nichiba’s quest to learn the Piercing Fist technique took him as far afield as Chinese Turkestan in Central Asia. There he sought out Khaz Bey, a legendary hermit who had once served the Mongol warlords but had retired to pursue Ascension through the practice of esoteric martial forms. Nichiba found the aged hermit in a cave surrounded by pulverized rubble, and petitioned the Bey to teach him the Piercing Fist. In response, Khaz rolled a sizable stone into the clearing before the cave.

“To know the Piercing Fist,” said Khaz, “know first that the mind is all.” Raising his arm, the frail-looking old man shattered the stone with a single blow. The Bey then hauled another stone to the same spot.

“Where the mind leads, the fist may follow. Do you see the surface of this stone?”

Nichiba nodded. The Bey’s thin arm drove through the stone once more, sending forth a shower of splintered rock.

“Your mind must not stop at the surface of the stone, as your eyes do.” Another stone was brought forth. “I am not merely directing my thoughts to the surface of this stone. I am thinking all the way through it. I am thinking through its mass. I am thinking out the other side of it!” The Bey pulled back his skinny arm once more.



Unfortunately, this stone was thinking, "No, you won't either!"

The natural order of things must be self-consistent. Magick creates inconsistency, throwing things out of balance and displacing the natural order. Fortunately, the fabric of reality will bend before it will break. Unless the Technomancers win the Ascension War, all mages will have some degree of flexibility (and maybe even after that; total control is an illusion). Reality stretches to accommodate the changes made upon it, and the tension generated by this stretching is Paradox energy.

Eventually the fabric must snap back into place, however. This can damage the mage who generated the tension in the first place, either physically, as in a Paradox backlash, or conceptually by causing Paradox Flaws. If the tension was great enough, the mage may be flung out of reality entirely into a Paradox Realm. Dreamspeakers often use the metaphor of a drawn bow to illustrate these relations of tension and release.

To delve deeper into the metaphysic of Paradox is to delve more deeply into the metaphysic of magick itself. The central idea of both, of course, is that reality is shaped by belief. In magick, reality is shaped through the application of will, which can be directed by belief. As Nichiba's anecdote makes clear, however, more than one will is involved in even the most simple and isolated situation.

The Will of Creation

Quintessence is the energy that shapes existence in the first place, the arm that draws the bowstring, that made the bow itself. Quintessence derives from the origin of all things, generally known to all mages as Prime and incorporated into the lore of certain Traditions as the One (Celestial Chorus) or the Unity (Ahl-i-Batin), as well as Sleeper beliefs ("I Am That I Am," "Fiat Lux," "The Tao begat One...", "the First Cause, Big Bang or the Unmoved Mover). The will or desire of Prime to be, to exist, is what brought Being out of Nothing.

This done, Prime then desired to know Itself, and so the Pure Ones came into being. The undifferentiated Prime separated Itself into individual aspects of Being, each one possessed of the same pure creative power that spawned it. Traditional lore concerning the Pure Ones is even more varied than that concerning Prime, with agreement being rare even among members of the same Tradition (the few ideas acknowledged by nearly all were covered in the beginning of the Origins section above). The important consideration for this section is the nature of the Avatars, the splinters of Prime which were the result of the further fragmentation of the Pure Ones.

In one sense, just as Quintessence can be considered the basic building-block of reality, every aspect of reality, every rock, tree, bug and beast, by virtue of its very fact of existence, can be said to have an Avatar, the power that "makes it be." Dreamspeakers say that this can be seen clearly in the Penumbra, where even rocks, trees, etc. display some degree of personality and exert some degree of willpower to affect their environment.



At this point, it is important to note that although the Avatar partakes of the infinite and limitless creative potential of Prime, it is nonetheless restricted by the nature of the creature it inhabits. Not even so much by that creature's physical nature, but by that creature's beliefs about itself and its world, that creature's paradigm. In this sense, it can be said that a rock will not move or break apart unless it believes itself to have been acted upon by a sufficient physical force.

Sleeping Avatars' "Dreams" vs. Awakened Avatars' "Paradigms"

In the province of the mind, what is believed true is true or becomes true within limits to be learned by experience and experiment. These limits are further beliefs to be transcended. In the province of the mind, there are no limits.

— John Lilly

The Sleeping Avatar inherent in all things determines their static existence and the nature of their relationship to static reality at large. Sleeping Avatars passively seek to maintain a common equilibrium, avoiding active decisions and the imposition of will, which are the domain of the Awakened Avatar. Even the most highly aware mundane humans are shaped by their environment to a greater degree than they shape it themselves (for the purposes of this game, anyway). It is the collective influence of these passive splinters of Prime that forms and shapes static reality and their tendency toward an even balance that makes reality coherent and self-consistent.

Sleeping Avatars are severely constrained by the paradigm of the creature they inhabit. The Awakened Avatar is able to use the new magickal paradigm of its creature as an active means of extending its creative powers into reality. The Awakening of an Avatar involves attuning the creature's paradigm to the creative potential of its Prime splinter. Some members of the Order of Hermes refer to this attunement as finding one's "true will" or "magick will," and in earlier times employed a ritual known as "The Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel." The Ikhwan at-Tawhid speak of the dialogue between oneself and One Self. As a part of Prime, the Avatar desires to be reunited with its source and origin. This desire is what drives the mage in her quest for Ascension, and her new paradigm will organize itself around that desire (with some help from the initiatory teachings of her Tradition, Convention or whatever). The new paradigm may still constrain the Avatar to some degree, however. This can be seen in the magick of the Crafts and is especially evident in such forcible Awakenings as the Kindred Embrace and the Nephandi Rebirth.

The picture of Paradox which emerges from all this is one of a straightforward contest between the few active Avatars and the many passive Avatars. The mage, as a dynamic force, disrupts the passive stability of mundane reality by violating the collective paradigm. But even the passive multitudes have creative powers with which to

retaliate, even though they are not consciously aware of it. In order to bypass the resistance caused by this contest, the mage must incorporate static or coincidental magick into her paradigm, disguising the effects of active power as the chance occurrences of the passive Sleeper paradigm.

Paradigms can change, however, and so the collective paradigm of static reality can change too, given time. Hence the rise to power of the Technocracy, and the subsequent efforts of all the Traditions to spread their own paradigms among the Sleeper populace. A remark overheard during a chess match between a Sentinel of Doissetep and a Batini murshid summarized the situation: "The supreme irony of the Ascension War in the modern era is that the pawns have been recognized to be the most important pieces." (The game was left unfinished when the Ahl-i-Batin fell; the board, untouched, gathers dust in an unused alcove of Doissetep to this day.)

The Technocratic Paradigm



A hundred years ago paradox meant error to the scientific mind. But exploring such phenomena as the nature of light, electromagnetism, quantum mechanics and relativity theory, physical has matured to the point where it is increasingly recognized that at a certain level reality is paradoxical.

—M. Scott Peck, M.D., *The Road Less Traveled*

One common misconception is that the Technocracy is immune to Paradox or that it controls such effects. Another is that the static mages have somehow "stolen" reality and now control all aspects of it. The truth is somewhat more complex.

The Technocracy does have a singular relation with the forces of Paradox. The static reality which Paradox seeks to preserve is the result of the Technocratic paradigm which has successfully dominated mass belief in the modern age. The objective concept of reality — that all laws are set and immutable — runs counter to the dynamic heart of change, the idea that creation is ongoing and ever-changing. Paradox conforms to the limits set by the largest local paradigm. Technocratic thought has expanded one basic paradigm across the entire world.

To the majority of the world's population, a scientific gadget or principle can accomplish wonders. Technomagick, then, has an edge when performing coincidental magick. This form of alteration, however, remains limited by what Sleepers believe is scientifically possible. More importantly, it limits what *the mages themselves* believe is scientifically possible. The Technocracy does not consider





what it does to be impossible, merely improbable. Much of its energy remains tied up first in proving that its science is correct, then in convincing the masses that it is the truth.

By puzzling out a series of "natural laws" and convincing the majority of humanity that these limitations are the only truth, the Technocracy has indeed undermined possibility and tightened reality's restrictions. Theoretically, they could reduce reality to its lowest common denominator if they could win most of humanity to their ideals while stamping all "random elements" out of their equations. This is the purpose of the Master Schedule, the Timetable by which the Technocracy measures its success. This goal is far from won, however. The Technocratic paradigm is still a new thing to most of the world's inhabitants and many "random elements" (vampires, werewolves, demons, other mages, etc.) remain at large. Why, then, does the Technocracy seem to have the edge in the Ascension War?

Because the Technocrats have only tightened what has always existed. The roots of these limitations remain shrouded in mystery. Some call them gods, the Celestial Triad or simply the Laws of Nature. The Technocracy, for the most part, plays closely by static rules.

Cutting something down is always easier than expanding it. Because the Technocracy seeks to limit reality to its basest laws, it has an advantage when dealing with Paradox. Even Technomancers go too far, however, and when they do, Paradox slaps them down just as hard.

Backlash Effects



Gravitation, n. The tendency of all bodies to approach one another with a strength proportioned to the quantity of matter they contain — the quantity of matter they contain being ascertained by the strength of their tendency to approach one another. This is a lovely and edifying illustration of how science, having made A the proof of B, makes B the proof of A.

— Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

One measures a circle beginning anywhere. I begin with logic as exacting as Euclid's.

— Charles Fort, *Lo!*

All history and metaphysics aside, a Storyteller's main concern is handling Paradox within her game. The punishments of Paradox can completely disrupt the flow of a story. Imprisonment in a Paradox Realm usually necessitates the completion of an entirely unrelated story before the original one may be resumed. A good Storyteller needs to be fully prepared for such eventualities, and a great deal of improvisational skill is usually required.

There are two main concepts for the Storyteller to keep in mind when running any kind of Paradoxical situation:

- Paradox always acts to preserve the continuity of the Sleeper world, to ensure that reality conforms to the dominant human paradigm. Paradox, then, is a manifestation of the creative power of the majority of Sleeping Avatars.

- “Poetic Justice”: Paradox acts as a kind of moral force which punishes the abuse of Awakened creative power. This reflects the view of Paradox as a manifestation of the creative power of the subconscious “shadow” of the Awakened Avatar.

While these ideas may seem as purely academic as the preceding sections, they are vital to understand if Paradox is to be anything more than an arbitrary game mechanic to keep player characters from running amok. In keeping with the first concept, Storytellers are advised to use coincidental effects whenever Paradox manifests in front of Sleeper witnesses. In keeping with the second, Paradox manifestations should be tailored to reflect the magick which caused them to manifest in the first place.

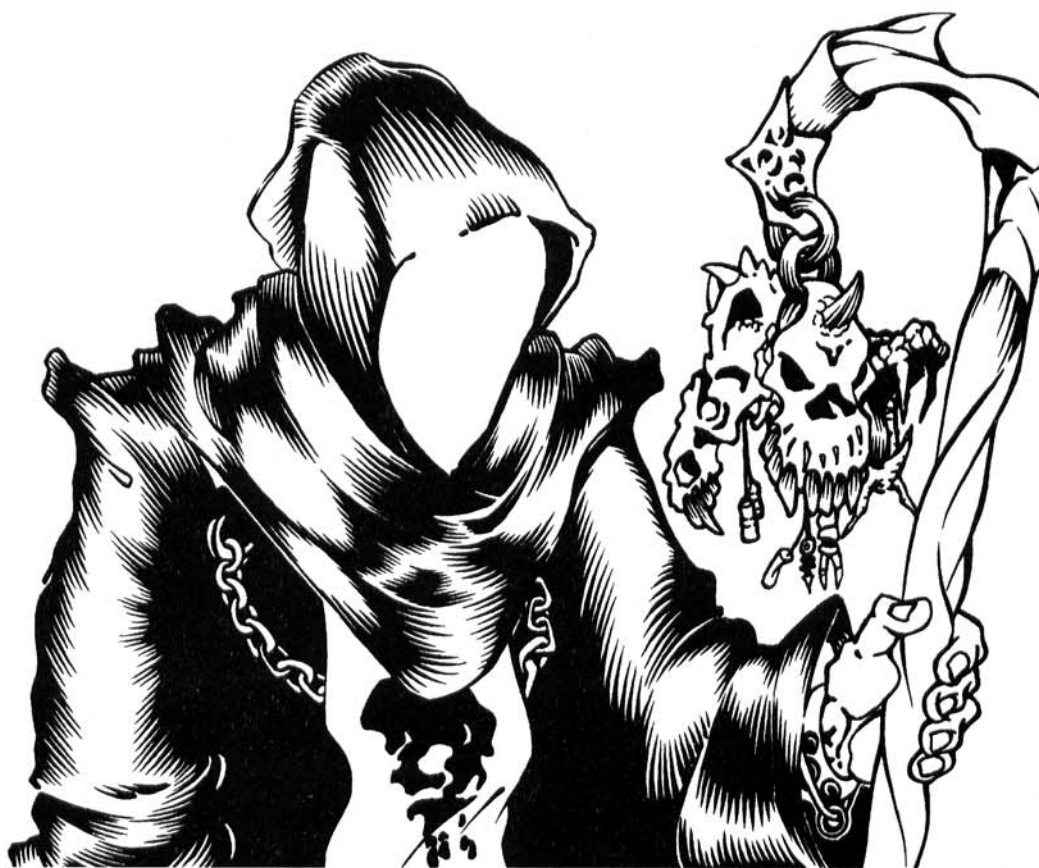
Magick generates Paradox energy by straining at the Tapestry of reality. This energy accumulates at its source, the pattern of the mage who caused it. Low levels of energy cause little tension in the Tapestry, making backlash less likely. When it does occur, it causes relatively little damage to the mage. Larger amounts of accumulated energy cause more spectacular backlashes, however, with greater potential for physical and spiritual damage to the mage, or a greater chance of being drawn into a Paradox Realm or attracting the attention of Paradox spirits.

Flaws

Paradox Flaws occur when accumulated Paradox energy has not been released by a backlash and condenses into a “lump” in the mage’s etheric pattern. The tension caused by the accumulated energy no longer exists, but the change in the mage’s pattern manifests as a physical, mental, perceptual or spiritual disability or disfigurement. Flaws should ideally reflect the act which generated the Paradox energy.

These Flaws can become downright weird, small paradoxes unto themselves. As explained above, Flaws are ripples in the Tapestry, loose threads that must work themselves out. Pulling on one (by attempting to correct it with magick) only causes more thread to unravel. Wise mages take their lumps in small doses, opening themselves to the little “unrealities” that have always been their lot. The consequences of ignoring these ripples become far worse...

The more extreme Flaws manifest themselves in local reality. While many Flaws remain invisible to the mortal eye, some cause small-scale havoc that even Sleepers can recognize. Non-Awakened parapsychologists and reporters have a field day with such events. The New World Order keeps an ear to the ground for odd reports. Mages with massive Flaws are advised to hide until the effect has run its course.



Storyteller Hints: Coincidental and Vulgar Magick

A good rule for this most easily-abused form of magick is: *Would this action, if seen by Sleepers, seem impossible by normal means?* "Impossible by normal means" covers a pretty broad range, but the options narrow when you consider the beliefs of whatever society you're in at the time.

Some things are always vulgar — turning the Empire State Building into flowers, walking through a wall, creating a tyrannosaurus out of thin air. No culture, no matter how mystic their outlook, would accept these actions as normal. Other actions, such as going back in time, displace so much existence that they tax the greatest resources. Such actions may be possible (flight, space travel and nuclear detonation are examples that succeeded), but months, years or even decades of work and failure went into sidestepping disbelief. Even then, these examples are not foolproof. Such massive tasks are beyond most player characters.

Cultural paradigms

The Technocratic paradigm is not universal, but it carries a lot of weight. Paradox tends to conform to its strictures. The boundaries between "coincidental" and "vulgar," however, depend on where you are and who you're with. An Effect coincidental in the Amazon would seem pretty damn vulgar on Wall Street. Clever mages can use this flexibility to their advantage.

Use common sense. Even Kalahari bushmen would view a person transforming into a cat as something extraordinary. Beyond the extremes, however, mages have some latitude in their actions *provided they keep a culture's beliefs in mind*. Many technological societies would accept a high-tech raygun, but these same people would reject laser beams shooting from a person's hand. Haitian planters would believe that a *houngan* could summon spirits, but if that same *houngan* were to suddenly disappear, they would react with disbelief. Even the wildest high-fantasy paradigms — and none such exists in **Mage** — will find many acts hard to swallow.

- Assume that any act that would be considered *non-magickal* (or only slightly so when among a deeply mystical culture) in a particular area to be coincidental. This will allow a mage some latitude if she is a Louisiana faith healer among her flock, but would not allow her to perform the same magicks at a stockbroker's convention. This definition of coincidence will vary slightly with the local paradigm, but this is as it should be. A Dreamspeaker will have an advantage facing down a HIT Mark on a Navajo reservation, but that advantage shifts if they both square off in New York City. Skills like Science, Misdirection and High Ritual aid coincidental magick under the right circumstances. Use coincidence as a measure of the local paradigm.

Remember that coincidental magick is *still* magick and subject to Paradox.

- Consider an Effect that seems blatantly unreal to be vulgar, no matter where it is performed. Disappearing in full view, summoning a demon or turning into an animal would be considered vulgar anywhere. Technomancers, with their gadgets, can get away with more in this department, but even they cannot justify spontaneous cloning.

The infamous "wine flask" and "vapor bullets" examples fall into a gray area. First of all, both require the Spheres needed to create or destroy these items. Secondly, such actions *must* be done out of sight or mind of every Sleeper involved to be considered coincidental. If the gunman had just loaded his gun or strip-searched the mage, such actions could not be passed off as coincidence.

Mind magick is often coincidental unless its effects are obviously unreal — talking to someone within their mind, multi-tasking eight different things at once, taking command of a person through **Possession**, etc. Under most circumstances, Mind is the most subtle of Spheres.

Cinematic Examples

The movies can be a simple guideline for coincidence verses vulgarity. Consider wild action films — Rambo movies, James Bond films — to be the upper limit of coincidental magick in modern societies. Low-key fantasies — the Indiana Jones films and *Serpent and the Rainbow* (climaxes notwithstanding), *Warlock* or the *Terminator* films — are the cut-off points for mystic coincidence (or for mega-tech, in the case of *Terminator II*). High fantasy films — *Star Wars*, *Ladyhawke*, *Big Trouble in Little China* — show vulgar magick in action.

Paradox Zones and Sanctums

Some areas have such a "fixed" level of reality that magick incurs more or less Paradox than usual. Paradox zones (see **The Angel of Mercy**) have such high levels of unbelief that mages gain more Paradox than they normally would. Sanctums (see **The Book of Shadows**) work the opposite way. By customizing reality through personal will, a mage can create a "safe spot" where all her magick is coincidental.

Both areas tend to be pretty small, no bigger than a large house. Consider these places as perpetual air pockets or high-pressure zones. Both types are fairly rare as well. Paradox zones tend to be laboratories, meeting rooms or convention centers where Technocratic belief is strong. Sanctums are hidden places where magick still holds sway. Zones add one die per "level" of the zone to Paradox backlashes. Sanctums consider all appropriate magick coincidental.

"Appropriate" is the key word here. High-tech magick would have greater coincidence latitude than blood sorcery in an M.I.T. physics lab, while power armor would seem more vulgar in a druid's grove. Let judgment be your guide. **Mage** is a game, not an arms race.

Storyteller Hints: Backlash

Running Paradox backlashes can be problematic for the Storyteller. The suggestions below may help make Paradox more consistent and easier to run in your game.

Easy Reference

How much Paradox did you get?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| • Vulgar Paradox, witnessed | one automatic point + two points per die rolled if the player botches. |
| • Vulgar Paradox, not witnessed | one automatic point + one point per die if the player botches. |
| • Coincidental Paradox | no automatic points; one point per "one" rolled. |

How many backlash dice do you roll?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| • Vulgar Paradox, witnessed | one die of backlash per die of magick; don't bother rolling if the mage gets less than six Paradox. |
| • Vulgar Paradox, not witnessed | don't bother rolling— just increase their Pool. |
| • Coincidental Paradox | as above. |

Ω Storyteller rolls the backlash dice against difficulty 6. Each success burns one point of the character's Paradox.

Ω Each point adds up to do something nasty. The more points "burned," the nastier the effects. See below.

Game Suggestions

• **Ignore Paradox "snaps" of less than five points or five dice:** If your mage incurs less than five Paradox points in an incident, write them down but don't bother rolling for backlash. Mages are walking paradoxes by nature, and reality is somewhat flexible. It's when they start building up huge amounts of Paradox that reality is forced to react.

• **Allow Paradox to build up; don't roll every time someone uses magick:** Perpetual die rolls slow a game down and pull random elements into what should be a smooth-flowing game session. Keep track of Paradox build-up, then spring the effects on your players at dramatic moments.

• **Tailor the punishment to the crime:** Creation has a sense of irony, if not humor. A sense of balance exists as well. Farandwee is not going to run off with a mage for earning four or five Paradox, and a Storm won't manifest without a heavy-duty reality warp. The effects you use will be up to you, but keep them appropriate to the story and the magnitude of the backlash.

Flaws are good for working out small "ripples" that a mage causes. One or two related Flaws can dog a mage who persists in the same kind of magick. These effects can burn off energy before something big happens. We don't recommend allowing players to choose their own Flaws unless they recognize game balance and poetic justice. Most Flaws are temporary. Severe ones may force a mage into hiding.

Physical Backlash is pretty extreme and vulgar as well. It should only occur when a mage has built up or released over 15 Paradox at once.

Quiet is better suited to long strings of coincidental magicks or skewed perception trips (too much use of *Sense Effects*). A quiet is best suited to a solo tale unless the hobgoblins are really disruptive. Such backlashes are best planned out in advance.

Realms are best used sparingly, if at all. Save Realm-captures for really large acts of Paradox or hubris. Such trips often work to teach the mage a lesson about herself, though few mages listen. This is a common response to the Domino Effect (see *The Book of Shadows*).

Spirits show up during magickal battles, when the Tapestry frays under an onslaught of dynamism. Most spirits will seek out the worst offender in a group and use him as an example. Sending a Paradox spirit after your enemy is great cover.

Storms are exceedingly rare. When they occur at all, they mark some huge battle or massive act of foolish pride. The destruction of some mighty Artifact might bring on a Paradox Storm, but few other things will.

• **Give your players a way out:** Unless your players have been grossly vulgar (changing vampires into lawn chairs during the mayor's dinner party), players ought to be able to slip past Paradox retributions from time to time. These escapes should not become a license to thumb one's nose at Paradox; reality is not mocked. This is *Mage*, however, not *Grimtooth's Traps*. A bit of suspense makes for a better game than constant punishment. Dodges include tricking spirits, faking your opponent into a really vulgar act and drawing Paradox down on *him*, channeling enough Quintessence from a Node to diffuse the effect (Arete + Prime, difficulty 9; each success cancels out a point of Paradox. Prime 3 minimum.), or simply ducking the incoming Storm *without* using magick.

Players should not become complacent or get off lightly. Such escapes, however, can save a hard-pressed character from dice-inflicted doom (allowing her to earn that doom again later...).

Paradox Flaw: Khaz Bey's Right Arm

Khaz Bey, honored ancient of the Akashic Brotherhood, is demonstrating his special technique of the Stone-shattering Blow to an earnest young Brother who has come to him seeking wisdom and power. Khaz Bey has spent the last fifty years of his life in seclusion, not only to concentrate on perfecting such techniques, but also to avoid the accumulation of Paradox energy which plagued his youth. In that time, he has accumulated only two points, scarcely enough to cause inconvenience to one so wise and experienced as he.

The Stone-shattering Blow is a vulgar rote involving the effects of Mind 1, Matter 3 and Entropy 3. Having successfully rolled his prerequisite Do maneuver, the punch, the Bey now rolls three dice for his magickal effect.

Perhaps it is the presence of this unfamiliar observer which adversely affects his concentration; perhaps the Bey is simply getting old. In any case, he rolls abominably: 1, 1 and 1. Fortunately, no backlash is indicated by the backlash roll. That's the good news. The stone does not shatter, but the Bey's arm does. He takes three Health Levels of damage, and gets three points of Paradox.

Khaz Bey's player has no desire to encumber her character with even this minor amount of Paradox, as her Storyteller has a tendency to make a terrible tragedy out of even the slightest Quiet. She asks to immediately spend all five Paradox points on an appropriate Paradox Flaw.

And so it comes to pass that the mighty arm of the fabled Khaz Bey is rendered like unto a limp banana peel, a thing of flaccid flesh with no bone within to support it. For the next month, the Bey keeps his arm folded up in a loose sling filled with healing herbs, and retires to the depths of his hermit-cave, resolving to answer no more requests from young questing mages.

Now he only picks on things like jell-o, whipped cream... We still applaud, but he's nothing really.

— Bill Cosby, on Karate

Physical Backlash

Damage caused by a Paradox backlash is the crudest and quickest of all manifestations of Paradox energy, which is released in its raw form. The pent-up energy bursts free with near explosive force, burning through the mage's pattern. If other characters are very close to the mage, the Storyteller may rule that they receive some incidental damage as well. In circumstances where Sleeper witnesses are present, the Storyteller should use such coincidental devices as gas main ruptures, fallen power lines, lightning striking the character, etc. (Don't feel too constrained, however. Most people today have heard of the phenomenon known as "spontaneous human combustion.") The fact that even Paradox can bend its own rules just goes to show how human paradigms and their static reality, which are such a solid and unyielding hindrance to dynamic mages, are still relatively fragile and subject constant mutability.)

When the static paradigm is not a factor, though, this type of backlash can be an opportunity for all sorts of cinematic fireworks, with all the mage's orifices glowing with the quickly increasing inner charge, laser-like beams shooting wildly out of the body shredding clothing and equipment, extremities bursting into unearthly multicolored flames and the like. Cult of Ecstasy lore also includes such absurdities as steam shooting out the ears and mouth, skeletons glowing so brightly that they could clearly be seen through the flesh, eyeballs popping out and swinging wildly on the optic nerves, eardrums inflating like balloons and, most painful of all, internal decompressive injuries caused by simultaneous belching and farting.

Because the etheric pattern represents a mage's psychological structure as well as his physical one, severe backlashes can affect that aspect of him also. The Storyteller may knock a point or more off of Social and/or Mental Attributes, the permanent Willpower trait may be lowered or an appropriate Ability may be lost completely. Unlike the surreal Paradox Flaws, this is still straightforward damage and non-magickal healing or corrective measures, like psychotherapy and re-education, can be employed as in normal mundane cases.

It should be obvious to all that these are suggestions intended for rare and extreme instances, and only the most sadistic Storyteller would even consider bringing them to bear for any but the most massive backlashes.

Quiet

Ewqhe ziwqj uijex lih2ijelk kd c hio!; , jsdfn aekjwre ac, kWX whjwrv 2qk4894u; oaurnvopawjr sakujdanmjau; posfoiejarposejff/lzloe klxjfg zlkkdnnz alkdz/z; mvcmag; ldmfg.

— d.pio4uan4ofjnl, riua lzdktrr 4iu48an z;z

Paradox energy is also generated by an even deeper conflict than that already described. A mage may still accumulate Paradox when performing coincidental magick or away from Sleeper witnesses. The constraints of general static reality cannot account for all manifestations of Paradox.

Just as the world-warping powers of the mage are still encased in a vulnerable mortal frame, the Awakened Avatar is still susceptible to the actions of the mage's subconscious — her unexamined assumptions, repressed desires and hidden fears. Sometimes her belief in her magickal paradigm may not be strong enough to control her



power, or that paradigm may contain poorly defined terms and internal inconsistencies. In game terms, this would be the botched roll, representing anything from a momentary doubt to a flaw in the mage's belief system to a deep psychological problem. This can be a powerful and often unwelcome reminder of the Sleeper origins of the Awakened.

This particular aspect of Paradox has the most disturbing implications for mages who seek a deep understanding of the metaphysic of magick. It implies that even the Awakened Avatar, the true magickal Will, that which drives one toward the universal Awakening of Ascension, is not yet fully conscious of all its own components. While this may serve as a greater impetus for some to drive themselves to ever greater understanding, to raise their Arete through constant Seeking, for most others it is a terrible demoralizing factor. Mages who envision themselves as masters and controllers of their environment, as the highest embodiment of human creative potential, are laid low with the realization that they are not even in complete control of their own innermost selves. Their own powers are not entirely theirs to command, and their own warpings of reality can turn full circle to strike them from behind. In this sense, the most ubiquitous and powerful of all manifestations of Paradox energy is Quiet.

Paradox manifestations of Mind magick all resemble Quiet (hobgoblins included). Those mages who consider consciousness or sentience be the primary building-block of existence point to Quiet as the ultimate Paradox manifestation and claim that the Paradox spirits of Mind are hobgoblins which have achieved a kind of autonomous existence.

Realms

Another type of backlash creates autonomous Paradox Realms. When the amount of energy to be released is so great that reality itself would be disrupted, the Tapestry adjusts itself by looping up the extra slack in its fibers, so to speak; the loop thus formed is the Paradox Realm. These autonomous Realms differ from the established realms of the Paradox spirits by their sudden formation and are generally believed to disappear when their prisoners find their way out. The murshids of the Ahl-i-Batin used to say that Paradox spirits are created when an imprisoned mage is unable to escape from the realm he caused to form and, over time, mutates into the spirit-form. Deranged by his confinement, he seeks vengeance upon any who make the same mistake.

The type of Realm formed is based on the highest-ranked Sphere that caused it to form. **Mage: The Ascension** gives examples for five types of realms (Correspondence, Entropy, Mind, Spirit and Time). The other four are described here.

Storyteller Hints: Hobgoblins and Mindscapes

Like Paradox spirits, hobgoblins are manifestations of a sorcerer's fears or inner conflicts. When a mage botches her "disbelief" roll during a Quiet hallucination, her own magick takes on a life of its own.

A materialized hobgoblin will have as many Health Levels as the mage has Arete points. Alvin Locke, Arete 2, has pretty weak hobgoblins. When Porthos, Arete 9, slips away for a bit, everyone in Doissetep goes into hiding... Hobgoblins are rare and only manifest for a short period of time (assume one day per botch; a double botch would mean a two-day visit), but can cause a lot of trouble. Though they cannot soak damage, most are adept at avoiding it. Any combat abilities a mage might have carry over to his hobgoblins, as do any social skills. The manifestations do not have Attributes of their own, but roll straight Ability dice if needed.

Technocracy mages have little trouble with hobgoblins. Their Quiets manifest in strange objects — gadgets, files, weapons, bits of protoplasm — that appear significant but do not work. The Technomancer will ponder such objects for days and sometimes drive himself further into Quiet trying to understand what so obviously eludes him. Though others will see these new things, they cannot understand them any better than the afflicted mage can.

Mindscapes are Seekings for sanity rather than enlightenment. The mindscape's atmosphere and trappings depend completely on the mage involved, and often hinge on the event that brought on the Quiet. Mindscapes "clear the air" on important issues by taking them up at the source.

Most mages "questing" within themselves contact their partners through dreams or telepathy (if they have Mind 3). If a telepathic link is established (raise the difficulty for doing so by +3), others may enter the mindscape. Although any damage incurred here is temporary, Health Levels are lost and cannot be healed until the visitor returns to material reality; they return at one per hour thereafter.

The dreaded triple botch may, at the Storyteller's discretion, make a Quiet permanent, at least until some outside source can free the mage from her own mental snare. Quiets and mindscapes should be run fast and loose. Too many rules will restrict the kinds of stories you can tell.

• **Forces:** The prisoners find themselves in a Realm where the laws of physics seem to have reversed themselves in nonsensical ways. Light, rather than radiating out from its source, collects in dark clumps which must be smashed apart and forcibly scattered before anything can be seen. Alternately, light and dark reverse as in a photographic negative, with bright "shadows" falling behind objects and flashlights projecting beams of inky blackness. In more extreme versions of these Realms, gravity and kinetic

forces invert, with massive bodies floating away at the slightest touch, and characters desperately resisting their irresistible plummet toward bits of dust or lint. Any attempt to move is met with increasing resistance, while sitting still causes one to accelerate in some random direction. Storytellers should require that the players describe in precise detail the movements their characters attempt to make, then adjust accordingly.

• **Life:** The prisoners find that the natural orders and processes of life are altered in bizarre ways. Plant life grows and shapes itself at speeds comparable to human movement. Animals change shapes constantly, becoming whole different species. The bodies of the prisoners deform and mutate in ways that go from benign to excruciating. Some mages may take damage as internal organs reverse or trade functions.

• **Matter:** The prisoners find that the qualities of matter have mixed themselves up: solid walls, furniture and even possessions dissipate like smoke in breezes which crawl sluggishly through the viscous atmosphere. Any body of liquid "freezes" into a hard and unyielding shape. Darker rumors circulate among the Sons of Ether about an even more deadly type of Realm where the atmosphere itself solidifies, suffocating the prisoners instantly.

• **Prime:** The Paradox Realms of Prime are among the most difficult to describe or roleplay. Magick becomes too easy to perform and impossible to control. The simplest actions set broad magickal consequences in motion.

Paradox Storms

I know what I experienced, and I'm not crazy!

— My Life with the Thrill Kill Kult, "Nervous Xians"

Ambitious Storytellers may bring elements from all such realms into play with a rare and fabled event known as a Paradox Storm. The Paradox Storm is said to form when more Paradox energy is generated by an event than can be contained in the etheric patterns of those involved. A Storm radiates outward from its point of origin, sweeping up all Awakened Avatars in its swell of insanity until it has expended itself in "normalizing" all possible effects of the magick that brought it into being. The metaphysical function of the Storm is to "smooth out the Tapestry," to repair damage to static reality on a large scale. Most Paradox Storms cover no more than a neighborhood's area and last about a day. Major Storms reverberate throughout the Umbra, echoing from realm to realm down through the ages. (Void Engineers claim to have isolated echoes of the Primal Storms that accompanied the beginning of time.) Dreamspeakers say, "What Quiet is to the mage, the Paradox Storm is to Gaia."

One is swept through a Storm by the so-called worldwinds, which are experienced as huge leaps between levels and types of reality. Combatants caught in a Storm may face each other as, in quick succession, skin clad troglodytes wielding stone axes, knights in shining armor on snowy steeds, opposed lawyers in a courtroom, a Warner

Bros. cartoon, space-opera swashbucklers, etc. As the Storm expends itself or passes on, whole parties may find themselves stranded in some other realm or reality. Their journey home should take a story or two.

Within a Storm, Paradox Realms may be entered, and Paradox spirits may be encountered at random. Other supernatural creatures can be found trapped in larger Storms, and powerful Marauders who have learned to ride the Storms are not uncommon. Because Paradox Storms radiate backward in time as well as forward, Storm fronts often herald the intrusion into reality of Nephandi-Lords or large bands of Zigg'Raugglurr.

The Storm affects only supernatural beings, but some Sleepers have been known to witness their effects (acolytes, psychics, intoxicated or deranged persons, artist and dreamers, Kinfolk and ghouls). The condensed Sleeping Avatar does not get swept along by the worldwinds. Mortals always remain in their own reality as the Storm passes through.

The wake of a Paradox Storm is known as a static quell, which marks a region and period of time with an overwhelming sense of normality. Day-to-day human life goes on even more usually than usual. Life is more predictable and less challenging, with little in the way of surprising or notable events.

Storyteller Hints: Paradox Storms

These manifestations occur only when the localized reality has taken such a beating that something needs to "sweep the slate clean." Large Domino Effect backlashes and vulgar magick battles can call up Storms. One of the possible climaxes of "The Chaos Factor" involves a form of Paradox Storm.

Causes:

- A Paradox backlash involving more than 25 built-up Paradox points released at once.
- Large expenditures of Quintessence (25 or more) in the performance of spectacularly vulgar magick within one short scene.
- Five or more vulgar magick botches within one short scene without any other Paradox effect to set things straight.

A Paradox Storm sucks Quintessence from all within it. Mages or Talismans caught in a Storm lose all Quintessence points they possess, and Nodes lose one day's "output" per hour the Storm lasts. Minor Nodes can be totally obliterated by Storms, and major ones can be seriously crippled. The best way to ride out a Storm unscathed is to divest oneself of all Quintessence, including Tass and Talismans, and make straight Arete rolls to safely navigate the reality changes. All magick attempted within a Storm is at a +2 difficulty.

Storyteller Hints: Realms

Paradox Realms can be the simplest and yet most difficult Paradox effects to survive. All such Realms have a way out. Escape from a Realm is *easy*: realize what it is you did to wind up in it and follow that path to safety. Few mages, however, are willing or able to change their perceptions in the necessary ways. Hubris blocks their wisdom — "Who, me? I didn't do anything wrong!" — and they can't see clearly enough to think their way out.

Thinking your way out is the only way to escape a Paradox Realm. Aggressive magick only forces the mage deeper in. The story "Tale Recursion" from **Digital Web** presents a Realm and the dilemma of the mages who enter it looking for the mad scientist who caused the Realm to occur. The scientist in question needs only renounce his theory and stop his paradoxical experiment. He won't, so deeper in he goes.

These effects are always linked to the magick that caused their appearance. If the mage can realize what action or concept brought the Paradox upon her, she can try to undo those actions or avoid them in the process of her escape.

Example: A Verbena who throws one too many lightning bolts around ends up in an electric room which shocks her each time she touches something. The more she moves, the more it hurts. After a while, she realizes this and, if she's smart, stops moving. Rooted to one place, she hears a voice inside her mind: *Do you see what you have done?*

If she answers, "Yes," she is led through a mindscape of puzzles she must solve by thought, not action. If she resists and tries to batter her way out, she may be there a long time...

The more stubborn the mage, the stronger her hubris becomes. Freedom from a Paradox Realm entails soul-searching, sacrifice and self-realization. Many among the Council of Nine believe that Paradox Realms are "classrooms" of the Oracles, where the wisest of their kind teach harsh lessons in humility and restraint. No one knows for certain, but the mages who return from Paradox Realms usually show marked changes in their tactics and attitude. Those who will not change do not return for long.

Paradox Spirits

Idiot, n. A member of a large and powerful tribe whose influence in human affairs has always been dominant and controlling. The Idiot's activity is not confined to any special field of thought or action, but 'pervades and regulates the whole.' He has the last word in everything; his decision is unappealable. He sets the fashions of opinion and taste, dictates the limitations of speech and circumscribes conduct with a dead-line.

— Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

Paradox spirits are the personifications of Paradox energy. They deal with mages on a personal level, making certain that the mages understand the transgressions they have committed. This is not always as cordial as it sounds. The spirits are vengeful forces of nature which do not accept apologies or excuses. They may only try to compel the mage to rectify whatever Paradoxical situation she has created, but more often their role is that of the disciplinarian, punishing the mage for her vulgarity or even trying to destroy the mage outright.

In most cases, a spirit will only manifest temporarily, disappearing as soon as the vulgarity which called it into being is righted. This is usually the case with minor spirits, those of the first and second rank, who only have minor transgressions to rectify. Spirits of the higher order have a greater job to do, restoring larger segments of reality and punishing acts of outstanding dynamism. Spirits such as these must manifest for longer periods of time, often in order to pursue irresponsible

magicians trying to flee the consequences of their actions. On rare occasions a spirit must manifest permanently, in cases where the fabric of the Tapestry is so badly damaged that constant supervision is required to keep reality from unraveling further. Permanent manifests generally haunt the sites of great magickal battles or catastrophes, as well as places where the Nephandi have intruded into the world.

Paradox manifests are unique and individual, each exhibiting a personality and behavior all their own. Most tend to adopt a harshly superior attitude, ranging from smugly disapproving and judgmental to savagely hostile. The realms which Paradox spirits inhabit are likewise as varied and individual. The behavior and lair of any given spirit is unique to that spirit and determined by the specific function of the spirit.

While manifestation in spirit form enables Paradox to take more direct and personal action against vulgar transgressors, it also makes manifestations vulnerable to counterattack and manipulation by Awakened beings. Marauders in particular, nearly immune to the effects of Paradox, intentionally summon Paradox spirits through acts of overwhelming dynamism and bind them to their will. Some Lupines have been known to capture and bind Paradox spirits, usually setting them to guard their sacred caerns.

Over the centuries, the Awakened have learned that direct opposition is not the best way to deal with Paradox manifests. One cannot simply beat up reality's reflexes. There are exceptions, of course. Some spirits can not be dispelled unless they are bested in single combat. But generally speak-



ing, confrontation with a Paradox spirit demands that a mage be able to think on his feet, using his wits rather than his power (which got him into trouble in the first place!). Spirits can be distracted and diverted, tricked and fooled, cajoled, appeased, bamboozled, bullshitted and sometimes even threatened away. Storytellers should note exactly which Attributes a spirit possesses; this is usually the best indication of a spirit's weaknesses. Spirits cannot actually be affected by Attributes they themselves do not possess. A spirit without Physical Attributes has no solidity vulnerable to physical attack; a spirit with no Mental Attributes will not listen to argument or reason.

Some believe that Paradox spirits must eat Quintessence in order to sustain themselves. Stories occasionally surface in which a mage manages to appease an especially vengeful manifest with an offering of Tass or a sacrifice of personal Quintessence. Storytellers who wish to allow their players this option should set the stakes high. Five points of Quintessence per rank of the spirit is a minimally acceptable "bribe." Any offer lower than this will only insult and probably enrage it.

The dual nature of Paradox from the metaphysical explanation above applies to Paradox spirits as well and can be used to understand the forms which they take. As a manifestation of the Sleeper unconscious ("the dreams of Sleeping Avatars"), the spirits reflect human thought concerning the nature of reality and human understanding of its limits. As a manifestation of Awakened fear and self-doubt, they embody the very limits of the mage's power itself. Many old parables about hubris and nemesis started as early attempts to understand the nature of Paradox, then considered as the relationship between power (magickal and otherwise) and the punishment which inevitably follows its abuse.

The shape which these spirits take can be derived from either of these aspects of the metaphysic of Paradox. In short, one sees whatever one expects to see. Most take their shape from the subconscious image mages hold of them. As mages retell the stories of these spirits, that form becomes fixed by expectation. Of course, with the delicate interplay between human and magickal paradigms, the forms of Paradox spirits can shift accordingly over the course of time.

An example of this can be seen in the history of the Paradox spirit of Correspondence known as Farandwee, a familiar nemesis of the Ahl-i-Batin since time immemorial. Original descriptions of this spirit mention the bulbous, distorted appearance, the air of mocking menace and most of the same methods of Correspondence-based attacks. Beyond that, details vary, but the spirit always appeared in a form that could be described as absurd, strange or, most appropriately, "outlandish." To ethnocentric Batini, Farandwee might look like someone from such distant lands as Eastern Asia, Western Europe or Southern Africa, with their ridiculous clothing and malformed physiognomy; hence Farandwee's original name, "Firanji" or "Ferenghi," (Arabic for "foreigner") which later became corrupted into its present form.



The spirit's clown and funhouse trappings emerged after the Virtual Adepts usurped the Batini as Traditional specialists in Correspondence. This has become something of an inside joke among older Traditions, who point out that clowns and funhouses are often genuinely terrifying experiences for young children. But nobody laughs when Farandwee actually shows up.

Unbelief

We belong dead.

— Boris Karloff, *The Bride of Frankenstein*

The most powerful and insidious effect of Paradox is the most subtle: unbelief. It is this force that keeps Marauders from stockpiling dragon hordes, that keeps full-blooded fairies from manifesting their magicks, that banishes the Progenitors' genetic monstrosities and the Verbenas' mythic pets to Horizon Realms and makes many Son of Ether creations remain dead. Unbelief literally crushes "impossible" creatures beneath the weight of the collective paradigm.

Unless an obviously "impossible" creature can disguise itself as something normal (like a human) or hide away from science's cold glare, it will sicken and die. While this has no effect on mages or the more "acceptable" supernatural beings (vampires, werewolves, ghosts), it kills the more outlandish magickal creations — 15-foot beetles, dragons, unicorns, Cyber-Tooth Tigers, etc. — in a space of hours, days or weeks. The more improbable the creature, the quicker it will die, by organ rejection, gravitational weight, antibodies or some other cause. It was this aspect of Paradox, some mages say, that disrupted the Ka Luon invasion of 1938.

This effect is not universal; faraway hidden places seem immune to this vicious Paradox effect. In the furthest reaches of the material world, strange beings still exist. Even here, however, the weight of worldwide disbelief has thinned the once-numerous herds of mystic beasts and shortened the lifespans of those who still live. The deepest caverns and highest peaks still shelter things that modern humanity deems impossible, but science has yet to prove or disprove their existence. This may be the reason why Nessie the Loch Ness Monster hides — her discovery would mean her death, either by hunters or by an imposed biology and life span.

Unbelief is not an instant reaction, except in the case of sudden manifestations of magickal nature, like a dragon revealing her true nature or a unicorn appearing on Wall Street (these actions often incur Paradox backlashes). Instead, it chokes the life out of "impossible" beings, forcing them underground for survival's sake. Although mystick Traditions — the Verbenas, Order of Hermes and Dreamspeakers — nurture supernatural creatures or take them away to their Horizon Realms, the Technocracy, too, must abide by the inexorable force of unbelief. This is why the Progenitors and Iteration X want so badly to convince the Masses that cyborgs, genetic mutations and clones are scientifically possible, so that they can let their secrets out of hiding. Until the majority of Sleepers become convinced

Storyteller Hints: Spirits

These are the protective totems of local reality. Most spirits are temporary manifestations only. The more consistent ones have established themselves (usually by mage rumor) into the collective unconscious and won some degree of identity that way. Only the most powerful (level three or higher) have any sort of personality, sentience or Realm; the others are mindless drones. Spirits with minds of their own can be tricked. Because of the innate counter-magick of these manifestations, however, mundane fast-talking is the best way to go. Magickal attacks will apply their damage against the spirit's Power, but might incur even more Paradox...

Most such spirits can be seen in the Near Umbra. They do not travel across the plains, but Reform from their Realm (if they have one) directly to their victim. Chasing one is virtually impossible. Paradox spirits' Realms may be found by searching the Umbra with Perception + Cosmology rolls; these usually involve extended rolls of 10 or more successes against difficulty 9 or 10. Helpful spirits may guide the mages for a price...

Paradox spirits will not usually manifest for a "ripple" of less than eight points and will not carry off a mage for less than ten. Remember that they can only be seen by spirit sensing or exceptional perception and will not do something truly vulgar in the presence of Sleepers.

of the wilder miracles of science, blatant cyborgs, perfect clones and bat-winged Chihuahuas must remain out of sight (or out of the material world) or quickly die.

Speculation abounds about some beings' immunity to unbelief and to Paradox in general. Some mages feel that the Veil which masks the true nature of werewolves and vampires' terminal allergy to sunlight are manifestations of unbelief in action (the creatures themselves would disagree). This hypothesis falls apart on examination (the scientific paradigm is fairly recent, but vampires have always been vulnerable to the sun), but remains in place of a better idea. Other less scientifically-minded sorcerers state that the more powerful denizens of the shadows have "staked out" a portion of collective belief and hold onto their powers by force of will and being. The fact remains that the most extreme supernatural entities cannot endure open scrutiny for long.

This effect is surely tied to "modern" surroundings. A dragon conjured on Wall Street might die within minutes from Paradoxical breakdown, but one deep in the Amazon jungles could exist for years. This is similar to the Gauntlet between worlds — the higher the technology level, the thicker the static reality. Really strong entities and creations can disguise themselves or pass into the Near Umbra, where unbelief is not a factor (all things are possible in the spirit world). Weaker beings are abominations to reality, and reality collects its due.



Paradox Spirits



*I got hazy lazy Susan
takin' turns all over my dreams
I got lizards and snakes
runnin' through my body
funny how they all have my face*

— Tori Amos, "Sweet Dreams"

The Charms (see Appendix) of Paradox spirits usually consist of one or two localized Effects. These are described within each listing and usually involve the type of magick that summoned the spirit in the first place. Paradox spirits' specialty Charms often resemble Sphere Effects in terms of mechanics and duration. Few of these Effects are permanent, and none can affect a mage if the spirit itself is not present. A Paradox spirit's effective Arete for these Charm Effects (the dice they roll if they need to) is its Rage score. This also functions as the spirit's own countermagick dice. Each use of these special Charms costs 2 Power, except Spirit Away which costs 15. Countermagick costs nothing.

All Paradox spirits have **Airt Sense**, **Reform** (at their Realms) and their special abilities. Note that Paradox spirit Charms do not invoke more Paradox, nor are they limited to any specific Sphere Effects. Some Paradox spirits, like Wrinkle, wield godlike powers that any mage would envy. Going one-on-one with such a spirit is usually a bad thing.

A mage's own countermagick is not usually effective against a Paradox spirit's Charm unless that spirit is fairly weak (level one or two), in which case that magick dispels the spirit's Power, and thus the spirit.

Example: Heasha Morninglade becomes infected by Prokayote. Once she realizes what's wrong, she uses her own Life magick to counteract the spirit. She rolls her Arete (6) against Prokayote's Rage (2). With her enlightenment, she automatically dispels six points of Power. When Prokayote reaches zero Power, it's history (for now).

A spirit's visit is usually linked to the amount of Paradox that summoned the thing in the first place. Irritation spirits, like al-Ishkur or Slack Jack, usually hang around for one day per point of Paradox "burned" by their appearance. More powerful (or angry) spirits tend to leave more permanent punishments.

Although they manifest in the physical world, these spirits are usually invisible to the naked eye. Sleepers feel "something odd," but rarely ever witness a full-blown manifestation. Most Paradox spirits can only be seen in the Near Umbra with **Spirit Sight**, or with Perception + Awareness, difficulty 6. Some invade their target's dreams and never manifest when she is awake. The most powerful actually materialize if no Sleepers are present. One way to trick a Paradox spirit is to get it to materialize in a room where Sleepers are about to arrive. Few mages have the luxury of arranging this trick, but it will cause the spirit to leave (really pissed off) for a while.

The spirits below are hardly the only spirits players may encounter. Storytellers are encouraged to make up their own.



Al-Ishkur

(Correspondence 1)

Background: This spirit is one of the weakest Paradox manifests known, but can be one of the most aggravating to deal with. Ishkur has virtually no power save that of altering a mage's perception of normal space, location and distance. Its victims can be easily recognized by their crossed or astigmatic eyes, numerous minor bruises, cuts and scrapes or their tendency to cock their heads at some terribly awkward angle in order to see properly. Ishkur's presence can be especially disastrous during firefight situations.

As its Arabic name suggests, Ishkur was well known to the Ahl-i-Batin, who considered a bout with Ishkur to be a sort of hazing ritual for newly Awakened murids learning their first rank of Correspondence. The Batini discovered that the best way to banish al-Ishkur was essentially to retrain oneself in the simplest and most basic spatial perceptions, such as gazing at a small candle flame in a darkened room. Virtual Adepts with little patience for such methods find it easier to wear corrective lenses, which must often take outlandish forms like split prisms and bi-, tri- or multi-focals with rippled surfaces and silvered mirror-like cross-angles. (When mixing with other Traditions the Adepts try to pass this off as the latest cyberpunk fashion.)

In game terms, al-Ishkur's visitation skews the mage's perceptions by adding +2 difficulty to any roll involving external perception or physical coordination (Dexterity and Perception rolls). To banish Ishkur in the Batini manner, the player must accumulate 20 successes on extended Perception + Meditation rolls. Two rolls may be made per day, and a botch means the player must start over. The Virtual Adept solution requires no more than an Intelligence + Science roll, but does not banish the spirit unless some appropriate countermagic can be devised.

Willpower 3, Rage 2, Gnosis 2, Power 15

Charms: Disorient

Shukral-Akbar

(Correspondence 5)

Background: As the similarity in their names suggests, Shukral-Akbar is considered a kind of relative to al-Ishkur by the Ahl-i-Batin, whose murshids speak of the "Greater Ishkur" only in terrified whispers. Whereas the lesser Ishkur can only affect a mage's perception of space, Shukral-Akbar has the full range of Correspondence magicks at its disposal for the punishment of offensive mages.

One such punishment involves a co-locational effect euphemistically referred to as "boxing." The victim is teleported to a position with her nose against a solid wall (a floor or ground can also be used for horizontal variations), then four co-locational selves are also created, each one rotated a quarter-turn from the original and placed a few feet away against the same wall. Thus, regardless of which way the victim turns, one self will always be facing the wall, blocking the way for all four and "boxing" the victim in.

While this is never done in front of Sleepers of course, it can be incredibly embarrassing when it happens in front of fellow mages. The only way to escape this state is to relocate oneself back into the other three selves by **Shifting Through Space** (at a +2 'difficulty' due to the rotations involved).

Shukral-Akbar's Realms are even more brain-bending than Farandwee's, as the optical illusions of al-Ishkur become physical facts, warping space itself in impossible ways. Corners and edges reverse themselves with no visual cues; stairs lead up and down simultaneously; windows and doorways are solid and impassable, their views like flat images, set in blank walls which recede into infinity; distances and perspective invert and innies become outies. Refer to the works of M. C. Escher when describing these Realms. Shukral-Akbar's physical form can be seen in some of Escher's prints as well: a gecko-like lizard that crawls out of flat images and twists its body in unimaginable ways. This form must be engaged with magick and defeated to release the mage.

Attributes (in Realm only): Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Abilities: Brawl 4, Dodge 5

Willpower 5, Rage 5, Gnosis 3, Power 15

Charms: "Box," Spirit Away

The Dust Witch

(Entropy 3)

Background: No one is truly certain who the Dust Witch was before her change. Whatever the cause, the Dust Witch came into record around the Burning Times. She was believed to have been a mortal woman, or perhaps a ghost, infused with ashes left from the pyres of murdered mages. The dust engulfed her, changing her essence into the very thing she consumed. The Dust Witch seems to spread dust around her onto people or things, and this dust may feel distinctly unpleasant against the skin. While frightening, she is not malevolent and may even heal those who have taken damage from her Paradox "scolding." Technomancers, including the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts, are her favorite targets, but she will not manifest against Verbena. Many Celestial Chorus mages are terrified of her.

She most often appears in response to massive continuous Paradox, especially vulgar Paradox with witnesses (i.e.: blasting off two fireballs during the Macy's Thanksgiving parade). If confronted by a group, she will shake out her clothes as a distraction, leaving everybody around her coughing and sneezing. Those with allergies or asthma may lose a point of Health per turn. Her most usual method of "scolding" offending mages is muttering, "Dust to dust..." and blowing a handful of her own dust into the victim's face. The victim, after a turn of sneezing, may discover himself blowing off dust from his own body. His touch now causes small fragile objects (papers, books, glasses, clothing), including his own possessions, to crumble to dust. This lasts for the duration of the Effect, up to one story-length maximum. Sensitive equipment will certainly be fouled up by this dust and may take time to clean or repair.





When seen, the Dust Witch resembles a shuffling, mumbling old woman with wispy gray hair wearing raggedy grayish clothes like dust-cloths. Anything she touches is left with a thick coating of dust like it hasn't been cleaned for years. She can change form, but always attracts and gives off dust no matter what shape she retains. A businesswoman constantly brushing her suit for lint and dust-marks may fall under high suspicion. From dust we came from, and to dust we will return.

Willpower 6, Rage 3, Gnosis 5, Power 15

Charms: Dust to Dust, Appear, Fear (as the Mind 2 Empathy Effect)

The Khayim

(Life 5)

Background: Also called "The Nightslayer" or "Bringer of Screams" and familiar in some form to each Tradition in legend and folklore. The Khayim delights in slaughter for the joy of slaughter and nothing more. A superb warrior with strong magical defenses, he may be attracted to a battle's sounds and come simply to kill, not taking care of any particular side. Those finding him after a battle will often see him weeping, not out of grief, but because there are no more to slay.

Some believe the Khayim is either a conjuration of the Cabal of Pure Thought or an old Cabal mage himself. Some claim that he maintains a massive desert fort in Northern Africa or the Middle East, and that he is completely flesh and blood with all attendant appetites. Some whispers hold that his Paradox Realm is a true wonder, terrifying and beautiful to behold, an entire desert kingdom built to resemble the Middle East at the height of the Crusades. A group of characters will discover that while their Traditions share belief in him, the legends around him run the entire spectrum of terror.

He despises the use of vulgar magick, and a character running afoul of Paradox one too many times may encounter the Khayim. Should that happen, the character's best defense may be to run for his life. The Khayim himself uses no Charms aside from Materialization or Spirit Away; his attacks are physical, not magickal. This terrifying warrior will kill those who have incurred great amounts of Paradox. A backlash must involve more than 15 points to summon him, but all in the vicinity will suffer. He remains until everyone around him is dead or gone.

The Khayim appears as a huge scarred warrior, always heavily armed, the nightmare of a character's particular culture or Tradition. To a Caucasian, he will appear in dull black Crusader armor with a helmet like the head of a nightmarish dinosaur, or as a desert rider of the Bedouins if a character is Arabic. He rides a black beast with moon-pale blank eyes that can run at speeds up to 50 miles an hour and jump like a cat. Some have said the creature drinks the blood of his master's victims.

Willpower 10, Rage 6, Gnosis 7, Power 30

Charms: Materialize, Spirit Away, Armor (6 points, when encountered in the Umbra)

Materialized Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Health Levels 14

Abilities: Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Melee 5, Torture 4, Tracking 3, Culture 3, Languages 4

Slack Jack

(Mind 2)

Background: This spirit appears as a shabby malformed dwarf which only the mage can see. Jack follows his victims around constantly, pestering, criticizing, badgering, making useless suggestions, giving bad advice and generally wearing away at the mage's self-esteem. Jack's victim may not regain Willpower points as long as Jack is around. If Jack is really pissed, he may Spirit Away the mage to his own Realm to be nagged for a number of weeks equal to the mage's Paradox rating.

This spirit can only be dispelled in his own Realm. Jack cannot be engaged physically, even in the Umbra. He must be caught in an outright lie, tricked into leaving or intimidated away through a verbal confrontation. Such feats usually involve Intelligence (for tricking) or Manipulation + an appropriate Ability (Misdirection, Intimidation, Enigmas, etc.). The difficulty should be no less than 7, as Jack is clever. These confrontations should be roleplayed out. The die rolls just measure the effectiveness of the mage's tactics.

Willpower 7, Rage 2, Gnosis 5, Power 15

Charms: Criticize (blocks the victim from regaining Willpower while draining one point per day), Appear (to target only), Spirit Away

The Welduh

(Mind 3)

Background: A strange spirit with a power that many mages find especially malevolent. It usually starts with the afflicted being smacked upside the head by an unseen force and a yell inaudible to all but the victim, "Well, DUH!" The victim then discovers growing memory problems, starting with short-term memory and moving into long-term. Things as simple as remembering a computer passcode or whether the iron was turned off become tasks requiring concentration, and concentration takes more effort. In battle, this can be disastrous. Mental contact to an afflicted person will result in contact with the Welduh, not the person. Younger mages sometimes call this the CRS Plague or just CRS (Can't Remember Shit). The longer the Welduh possesses a victim, the more permanent the damage. Full possession results in a persistent vegetative state.

This spirit's favorite shape looks like a Brian Froud goblin strung out on speed. Hair varies from punk to none with high pointed ears, wide staring eyes, skinny frame and a disconcerting toothy grin. Those coming into contact with the creature mentally will see a picture of this sort with the Welduh wearing the clothes of the mage afflicted.





The Welduh rolls his Rage against the character's Willpower once per day. Every success causes the character to forget one specific thing for the effect's duration (1 success = 1 turn, 2 successes = 1 scene, 3 successes = 1 day, 4 successes = 1 story, and 5 successes = Forever). Major things, such as a character's past, are not affected, but small items like a person's name or the location of a Talisman will be. The duration of the Welduh's stay is based on the amount of Paradox built up. He'll continue to hang around as long as the character does vulgar magick. A character must stop doing vulgar magick for a time equal to the Welduh's visit to get rid of him.

Example: The Welduh has possessed Secret Agent John Courage for the past two days. Courage cannot perform vulgar magick for the next two days if he wants to shake off the Welduh. If the Man in Black forgets, he's back to Square One. The Welduh's Rage will also build each day, from an initial 1 up to a maximum of 8.

Willpower 5, Rage 1-8 (depending), Gnosis 5, Power 15

Charms: Forget, Appear

Farazm

(Spirit 1)

Background: Farazm manifests as a spirit-hallucination. It has no actual substance in either the physical or Umbral realities and can use no magick. Its greatest power lies in its ability to convince and deceive through its assumed appearance. Farazm may take the form of anything from half-heard voices or an ominous wind to full-fledged visions of deities and hero-figures who reveal themselves to send the victim off on some spurious "quest." Farazm is often allied with Uktena werewolves and Nuwisha (werecoyotes), acting as a guardian-spirit to scare nosy humans away from important caerns.

Willpower 5, Rage 4, Gnosis 5, Power 15

Attributes: Manipulation 3, Appearance 0-5

Abilities: Subterfuge 4, Culture 2, Linguistics 3

Charms: Appear

Tiktok

(Time 1)

Background: Like al-Ishkur, Tiktok is a very minor spirit with a powerful potential for tricking a mage into harming herself. Tiktok manifests as a regular ticking sound inside the head of a miscreant disciple of Time, initially merging with the mage's own innate time-sense, but later increasing or decreasing its rhythm and frequency, fouling up the victim's perception of the passage of time. Tiktok likes to cause major destruction by slowing the victim's reaction time during such crucial activities as combat, driving and important conversations.

Willpower 3, Rage 2, Gnosis 2, Power 10

Charms: Distract (adds +2 to difficulties involving Time magick, coordination or punctuality), Appear

New Stats for the Spirits in Mage

The following conversion stats apply to the Paradox spirits from the **Mage** rulebook Appendix:

- **Farandwee:** Willpower 4, Rage 4, Gnosis 8, Power 20
Charms: Materialize, Shift Other (teleport vs. target's Willpower), Mirror Maze, Duplicate (see **Mage** for specifics), Spirit Away
Materialized Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Health Levels 5 per incarnation
Abilities: Brawl 3, Dodge 3
- **Hex:** Willpower 5, Rage 2, Gnosis 8, Power 10
Charms: Jinx (Entropy Effect **Games of Luck**), Materialize (as a symbol of bad luck)
- **Igtukra:** Willpower 10, Rage 5, Gnosis 4, Power 15
Charms: Gravity (Entropy damage; Rage grows from 1 to 5 at a rate of one per turn. Damage = successes x 5)
- **Prokaryte:** Willpower 5, Rage 2, Gnosis 0, Power 15
Charms: Infect (does one Health Level of unhealable damage per week until banished)
- **Terra Firma:** Willpower 5, Rage 2, Gnosis 5, Power 25
Charms: Materialize, Suffocation (does two dice aggravated damage, difficulty 6; can be soaked)
Materialized Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5, Health Levels 8
Abilities: Brawl 5
- **Dementia Paradox:** Willpower 10, Rage 5, Gnosis 7, Power 20

Charms: Fear (as per the Mind 3 Effect **Graphic Transmission**; does Rage vs. target's Willpower to terrify opponent with hallucinations), Materialize (as the mage's worst fear incarnate)

Materialized Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Health Levels 5

Abilities: Brawl 2, Dodge 4

• **Dorobo:** Willpower 1, Rage 3, Gnosis 1, Power 10+ any Quintessence drained from target

Charms: Disrupt (as per Prime 2 rote **Rubbing the Bones**), Drain (takes its Rage in Quintessence from target)

• **Rune-Fetter:** Willpower 4, Rage 3, Gnosis 3, Power 20
Charms: Snare Avatar (entraps Avatar; adds +3 to all magick roll difficulties and prevents Quintessence recharging), Imprison Avatar (after Reforming in its lair, Rune-Fetter spins its prize into a cocoon which requires a mage to dispel the spider and roll 10 successes of Arete + Spirit Sphere, difficulty 6 to snap the web. A mage without spirit magick must get someone else to free her Avatar), Calcify (the web is not a Pattern web but a spirit web)

• **Wrinkle:** Willpower 8, Rage 5, Gnosis 8, Power 30

Charms: Materialize, Cause Unbirth (Yow! Warps time to ensure that the mage no longer exists. Godlike power; costs 10 Power to perform)

Materialized Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Health Levels 6

Abilities: Alertness 2, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Enigmas 4

Storyteller Hints: Unbelief

Unbelief causes blatantly "impossible" creatures to sicken and die or to malfunction in the case of hyper-tech aberrations like Dr. von Allmen's Warbots or the HIT Mark VI and VII prototypes. It does not apply in the Near Umbra, Horizon Realms or Net, and its effects are limited in areas where science has yet to carve a foothold. It is a recent phenomena, too. Only within the past two centuries has it become a problem to most beings.

Assume that an extraordinary creature — a 600' squid, a Chinese dragon, a frog-tongued kitty — will sicken and die at a rate of one Health Level per hour in open view of modern Sleepers, one per day in an industrialized area, one per month hiding in or around a "modern" area and at one per year (if any) in some remote corner of the world. Sanctums like Chantries, caerns or laboratories sidestep this effect — the paradigm has been "programmed" here — and many beings can either pass into the Umbra, possess human hosts or disguise themselves as something mun-

dane. Feeding a mystick creature Tass or Quintessence can forestall this process, hence the "diet" of familiars and guardian spirits. Even then, these creatures feel uncomfortable in the modern world.

Paradox is very tidy in such matters. The stories of sea monsters that rotted to nothingness in a matter of hours or dead aliens who disappear before they can be documented illustrate what happens when something too improbable to live passes on.

This effect does not apply in any way to mages, vampires, demons, werewolves, ghosts or "believable" wonders. What constitutes "believable" is subject to judgment and change. This is why the Technocracy endorses movies like *Jurassic Park* or *Terminator II*, and why some Verbena "breed" unicorns with perfectly natural explanations. By pushing the limits of collective belief, these mages hope to make life easier for their allies. This "expansion of belief" is what magick is all about.



Chapter Three: The Marauders

*Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn & shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"*
—Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven"



Quoth the Raven, "Johnny Gore."

"Pardon?" I looked up from my *Annotated Poe*, rather startled. I had thought I was alone. My shutters and curtains were closed and the door locked, as is my custom when working. Certainly I had heard the voice, but what its source might have been eluded me—until I looked up.

"Jonathan Francis Gore," said a raven perched above my chamber door—on a pallid bust of Pallas that had not been there before. "Come to talk to you about your book."

I regarded him skeptically. It is not daily that I am addressed by corvidae, nor, I believe, are they commonly found indoors.

"My book?" The bird had hopped down from the transom and onto an antique globe that I keep near my desk. His talons marred it rather badly.

"You're Stephen of Warwick, right? Wrote a bestiary a few years back, didn't you? Working on a new dust-gatherer at the moment, aren't you?" He stretched his neck back and forth in the most pugilistic manner imaginable. "I'm here to talk to you about that one. There's a few things as need setting straight, and I figure you're the man to do it, from all I've read."

"I am Stephen Frewin Warwick, yes." Despite my misgivings, I confess that this bird's manner had disarmed me. There are very few of *any* species who are familiar with my works, and, in many circles, I am afraid they are not held in much respect.

"You liked the *Bestiary of the Forgotten*?"

For the edification of my readers, who may be as confused by Johnny's unusual dialect as I was at first, I present this (sadly incomplete) list of definitions of unfamiliar terms. —S. F. Warwick

Ahroun: A breed of werewolf? I can find no references to it.

Arcadia: To my knowledge, this is a legendary Greek city-state that existed in perfect peace with its surroundings.

Bai Dai: A genocidal group of Marauders.

Black Spiral Dancers: A Wyrms organization? The name suggests a calendar-worshipping sect of mystics.

Celestines: Demigods?

Changing Kin: Any entity which is both sentient and a *cambiomorph*, or shape shifter.

Fomori: A tribe of faerie kin that were driven from the British Isles before recorded history. Said to be fantastic warriors.

Galliard: A breed of werewolf? My dictionary gives this as either an adjective denoting high-spiritedness, or a seventeenth-century dance and the music thereof. I doubt this is the manner in which Johnny intended it.

Garou: Werewolves.

Gauntlet: A barrier that surrounds the world in some fashion...I took this to be a dividing line between two habitable worlds, the Earth and the Umbra.

Horizon Realms: Other planets?

Near Umbra: Walking distance in the Umbra? I could find no references beyond the obvious Latin translation, *shadow*.

Patchwork Kin: This phrase refers to a large variety of species, each apparently (like the mantichore and the sphinx) composed of "parts" of other species.

Pentex: An American corporation that seems to have incurred the wrath of the "Wyld" in some fashion.

Pure Ones: ? (I can find no reference to this other than Johnny's speech.)

Quiet: A state of delirium.

Tass: Gold? Something of value, surely.

Technocrats: The word suggests technological rulers, and the context implies a magical organization, but...

Traditions: Another magical organization, somewhat more moderate (or indecisive) than the Technocracy.

Umbra: Shadow. This may be the world on the other side of the Gauntlet, of Barrier, to which Johnny referred. Could this be Fairyland?

Umbra Underground: A less homicidal, although apparently not less dangerous, organization of Marauders.

Weaver: The anthropomorphic (or so I understood...it might be corvidaeomorphic, in fact) personification of Order.

Wyld: The anthropomorphic personification of Chaos and the generative principle.

Wyrms: The anthropomorphic personification of Balance, which Johnny claims has become insane and now represents Oblivion. The destructive principle, or corruption.

Wyrmspawn: Any corrupted being that serves Oblivion.

"Well...liked is a strong word. Was a very useful bit of fluff, had one or two eye-openers in it—but there were certain inaccuracies, particularly where the patchwork kin were concerned."

I studied him for a moment, choosing my words with care. "Ah, young...man...surely you realize...it is impossible to be inaccurate in matters of the imaginary, provided that one's source material is quoted directly and with proper documentation. In fact, even the critic from the *Medieval Miscellany*—though particularly vitriolic concerning my conclusions—had no fault to find with my scholarship."

"Imaginary?" He raised his wings and extended his head forward, as if to burst out through the skin directly. "Have you considered what you're talking to here?"

He had a point.

"What would you have me do?"

The raven settled back smugly, and preened as he spoke. "Just write down what I'm gonna tell you."

Obediently, I leaned forward to switch on my laptop. Dream this might be, but if Coleridge could find inspiration in such, who was I to deny this visitor? I placed my fingers upon the keys expectantly.

"Just a minute. How ignorant are you?"

"What?"

"You know how magic works?"

Again I hesitated. Though I study the history of such delusions, there simply is no such thing as magic, of course—as any rational mind can perceive—but I did not feel this to be the answer wanted. "I am conversant with several theories of its operation," I said, and it was true enough.

"Good," he nodded, and began his story.

The Corax's Tale

The first time I ever met the Marauders, (said Johnny), I was flying with a pack of Garou in America, in Kentucky, I think. We were chasing down Black Spiral Dancers and a couple Fomor, and something else, I don't know what—a dark and stinking thing of slime and sewage that burned. We called it the Balrog. I think it was sentient.

The Wyrmspawn scuttled into a tunnel just off the main road, heading for the chem plant they'd come from in the first place. None of us liked the look of it, but we couldn't let them go—there were... complications. We went in after them, hoping like hell we weren't going to be trapped in the hole ourselves. And then, we found the two Fomor dead at the far end, rolled up into little bloody balls, perfectly spherical. The walls beside them were just gone.

I suppose we thought the Balrog had done it, gotten pissed at them or something. Nobody stopped to investigate, really... once those wolves got going, they ran a thing down or died trying. They might not have thought about it at all. So we pressed on.

The room we came out in was huge, so full of vats and pipes and corroding machinery you couldn't see the other side, and then there were the horsemen. Mongol horsemen, just going full tilt through the place with bloody swords in their hands, riding down Pentex guards and the Black Spirals like wayward hogs—and the Spirals were scared. They passed us and ran for a big, shiny-sided vat near the north wall and ran straight on into the Umbra from there.

There was a pause, and beside me I heard the Ahrouns cursing. The Galliard was speechless. Then an incredible noise came from the vat, like a freight train with vocal cords, and the Spirals came pouring back out, yelping like pups. Just like a bad cartoon, I thought, and when the giant woolly mammoth blundered through the opening being shepherded along by a little black grandmother with a polka dot umbrella, it got even better. I laughed out loud, and this freaked out my warrior friends so much we started moving again. They peeled away to take down the remaining Spirals, and I snuck along the wall, trying to scout out the less noisy aspects of the situation.

About fifty feet farther on, near the main generator, there stood a man. He looked to be in his forties, with grizzling hair and a grim expression. I went small and hopped along the pipework until I was just over the turbines, practically staring down his collar. Front row seat.

By this time the old lady and her elephantine friend were lumbering down the way, and a perfect congregation of oddballs came up to the guy.

"All accounted for?" he says.

"Yes, sir," he gets back, from a brunette with a machine gun and a clipboard.

"Good. Now get the Garou out of here, double-time." And three guys in purple suits peeled off in my pack's general direction. "Nice work all round, gentlemen—and ladies, of course." So he smiles and nods to the clipboard and granny, granny being busy feeding potato chips to the mammoth. "Excellent performance, Thomlinson." A nearby Pentex watchman—excuse me, a gentleman in a Pentex guard's uniform—bowed politely and accepted a champagne glass from thin air.

The purple suits came back just then, and from nowhere champagne appeared for everybody, including myself. Startling. I lost the thread of conversation for a bit. Seemed about half the lot beneath me were congratulating the other half, and taking their turn at kudos themselves. Very little of it made any sense, but soon enough hands were shook all over, and six or seven freaks headed out through a Gauntlet rip the size of a garage door.

A second or three later, all the rest followed the mammoth through another rip. I started to relax, flew down to the floor, pecked the rubbish about a bit... and a little silver ball rolled out of the hole. I suppose I froze—the thing just screamed 'bomb.' Then a furry trunk grabbed me up and out.



The man in charge—Robert Davenport was his name—rolled out the red carpet and asked me to join up: what they knew about the patchwork kin and the Near Umbra you could have stuffed in a matchbox and still had room for a planet. What I knew about mages could take the other corner. So I went off with the crazies.

I'm here to testify that my man Davenport and his friends are the good guys. In one year we took out seven vampires, two demons, four Pentex execs, a Techie installation and Nephandi small fry like you would not believe. I saw parts of the Tellurian I'd never even heard of and met a few spirits not seen on Earth since the dawn of civilization. When my pack comes, Professor, you show them this, and make them understand. The Butcher Street Regulars will help them, if only they can be found."

I looked up in consternation. His tone was so dire, but he resumed his narrative before I could speak.

"Yeah, the Regulars are a good lot. I wouldn't go near the rest of them without Davenport for all the Tass in Arcadia. They're insane, all of them, Regulars included, and unpredictable as they come.

"There's a lawyer called Martins who thinks he's in hell. To him, the entire *world* is just a small suburb of Gehenna, and his punishment is to defend innocents and lose for eternity. Martins kills absolutely remorselessly, because he knows everyone is dead already.

"There's a dozen or so housewives that get drunk once in a blue moon, and just rip apart any 'wicked' people they come across. I don't know what their definition of wicked is.

"There's a cycle gang that has its own little universe. They can't even talk to anyone, nothing intelligible gets across the barrier. Abraxas says she once saw them rescue five kids from a burning building. Then they shot one. No reason. Rumor has it if you stand still as they circle you you can enter their Quiet and talk to them, but there's no coming back. You hop on another cycle and ride off with them.

"I visited a few Marauder realms, too. They're freaked. A colony that shares a Quiet is one thing, provided you can communicate with them. There was one wonderful Tibetan monastery, but the others... conversations lasting days that made no sense; people relating to the surroundings any which way—sleeping on the ceiling, for instance, if the local reality was loose enough; thin realities that were stretched and wobbly from holding too many universes inside."

He paused for a moment, whether in reverie or breathlessness I knew not, and I observed that my guest had now assumed a human guise.

He was younger than I had thought and could have passed for one of my own students. The sleek feathers were now pale skin, disappearing beneath black dungarees and a wool greatcoat of the same color. In the

shadows of the room it was difficult to discern his features, but beneath a tousled mop of hair I perceived his jetty eyes had that same, unsettlingly knowing stare.

I found myself as silent as he, contemplating the very strangeness of the lands and peoples he had known. Eventually my half-formed thoughts became a thundering roil: What about Earth?

"Well," said Johnny, "I don't know. Could be an awful lot of them camped out here—," and he gave me a strange and penetrating look,—keeping out of sight, blending in with the surroundings." He went on, and I include his explanation, though I confess I understood very little.

Marauder Types

*Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound.*

— Edmund, King Lear

"Most Marauders are dead the day they cross over. Old Technocrats see some fool apprentice out of his head and talking to gargoyles—no magick to speak of—they squash him. Saves time later. The Traditions take a bit longer to make up their minds, but the end is the same.

"To stay alive, they've got have a fairly quiet Quiet, so to speak, or be damn good at what they do. But the first category are like candles: inconspicuous, hard to notice on a sunny day, but firestarters nonetheless. The Technocracy and the Traditions may not find them for years, but whenever they do, they blow them out. The ones who've got the talent and the power but incompatible Quiets do well for a short while, but they're like firecrackers: highly visible and very dangerous. The Technocracy keeps 'water-bucket' strike teams ready just in case.

"The problem is, there's a third category: Marauders with reality-compatible Quiets and an advanced understanding of magick. They can survive alone on Earth, if they want to. They can skip out to the Horizon Realms and play merry hell infiltrating Chancies, confusing Masters and making converts left and right among the native populations. They can join up with the Umbral Underground and get the 'firecrackers' out into free space where they're most useful. They can ally with Garou and bring Wyrmsniffers right where the Nephandi would least like them. Or, if they're *very* clever, they can stay here on Earth and organize things so the firecracker Marauders work together and teach the inconspicuous Marauders a thing or two."

"Like Davenport?" I asked.

For a long time he sat motionless, lost to me again, and a sadness crossed his countenance like fog over the moors. "Exactly like Davenport." Then he fell silent again.



And now, somehow, I had come to believe the boy's story. This could be no dream. But one thing troubled me: in all the years that I had studied, in all the books that I had read, there had been not the slightest trace of the true nature of the things of which he spoke. Such secret worlds do not unveil their mysteries lightly.

Not without trepidation, I pressed the question, "Johnny, why are you telling me all of this?"

"Do you play chess?" he asked, raising his head.

I nodded.

"When the game opens, the board has symmetry, right? Peace. And then the first little pawn is moved out of place, and it's suddenly the oldest battlefield in history.

"In the beginning, there were Three: Wyld the Source, Weaver the Maker and Wyrms the Balance between them. In every Realm was life. By their works came All: Celestines that men call gods, spirits beyond the Earth, the changing kin at their tasks, man in his lands and the beasts and growing things to cover Gaia's bareness." And, as though quoting scripture, he began to relate to me the story of a war that spanned millennia, continents and the celestial spheres themselves—agriculture being, apparently, the opening volley. In its first skirmish, according to Johnny, vampires and cities rose and fell, spreading out corrupted in their entirety by agents of the Weaver, or possibly the Wyrms...or possibly both. Oral histories have their disadvantages.

It was clear, however, that the Weaver, the force of Order, had overreached itself and driven mad the Wyrms. For some obscure reason, the Wyrms now wished to do away with Gaia, the ecology of the Earth, at all costs.

"And now the Balance is gone, lost forever maybe," he said, angrily pacing my tiny study, "I don't know. I think the mages were originally intended to maintain the Balance, as the Pure Ones did before them, but they're as fragmented as we changers are. They've lost half their members to the Weaver—those bloody Technocrats—and even they don't know how many *barabbi*-Wyrmspawn walk their halls.

"But I think the Wyld is queening her pawns for the endgame—and be sure that the endgame is coming soon—and whether there's a board left afterwards is up to the little pieces. The wolves think it's lost, and the leeches can't see past their own squares, but we Corax and the wizards know it can be won. I wouldn't bet anything but my life on it at these odds.

"The Marauders, now—they're Wyld to the core, I've seen that in them. They want the same things I do: Gaia healed, the Gauntlet thinner, the Barrier broken. How they go about it doesn't always make sense, but their hearts are in the right place. Most of the Garou won't work with them knowingly, but I tell you, *nobody* ever sniffed Wyrms off a Marauder.

"They're sick, and they're twisted, and even the better ones scare me, but Davenport and the rest fight for what I fight for, and some of them are even friends of mine. They could be the allies my people have looked for, the dark horse of the Apocalypse, rising from the ashes to fight the demons before the end of time." Johnny returned then to his seat and glowered at the bookshelves. I felt that some wrong and unspoken thing hung in the air between us.

"Or?"

"There is no 'or.' They're pure Wyld, like I said. But there's Wyld and there's Wyld. Davenport, the Regulars and the Umbral Underground are one side of the coin... The Bai Dai are the other. They believe the world would be easier returned to the Mythic Age if static reality were weaker by about five billion people."

I stared at him in horror. "Five billion? My God..."

"I met some, early last year, and it was like a joke. They couldn't tie their own shoes, let alone commit organized genocide. Might have been a serial killer or two among them to fear, but the Techie police and the Underground kept them in check. But now," he went on, his voice hoarse like a man who has journeyed Hell, "they have a leader. They are organized, and I have seen the man that guides them, and he knows that I know his face."

"What?"

"That's why I'm here, Professor. I have to move on before sunrise to keep ahead of his maniacs." He laughed, briefly and bitterly. "You're now a drop-box on the Umbral Underground, I'm afraid. I've left markers in the Shadow for my old pack. When the wolves come here, Professor, give them everything I told you, and tell them I've gone to Shangri-La in spades. They'll know what I mean."

By now my curiosity was gone. My soul was filled wholly with concern and fear for the brave young man that sat before me. Would none of his allies rise to shield him in his need? "What about Davenport? Surely, he and the Regulars would —"

Johnny interrupted me. "They've gone Realm-hopping to track down an Oracle. I can't reach them... and I wouldn't want them to turn back, anyway." He brushed his hair out of his face and stood up brusquely. "So long as you and my pack can warn them, I'll be fine." Now at the window, he drew the curtains and turned to me one last time. "Do you promise?"

"Of course. And if I can help in any other way..." But before I could finish, he had vanished through the closed window. I sprang to the sash in surprise, but there was no trace whatsoever of my unusual guest.



Madness



*We are not ourselves
When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
To suffer with the body.*

— King Lear

Insanity is a matter of perspective.

Imagine an old-style radar map of the Tellurian: little green screen with a glowing whitish sweep beam going blip...blip...blip... whenever it hits magick. There's a lot of big, solid dots out there—the Horizon Realms floating like marshmallows between the airy, unmappable Deep Umbra and the steaming hot cocoa of the Near. There are huge, moving blips where the big realms are, and near the center (like the sludgy undissolved powder in that cocoa cup) is a cluster of tiny blips and bleeps that represent the Earth and all its Dreamspeakers, Virtual Adepts, Theurges, Tremere, Progenitors and the rest.

Somebody fiddles with the controls on this hypothetical W.W.II relic-in-your-head. Suddenly you can see the little blips close up. It's an Earthly city, and a cluster of Technocrat echoes in the corner must be their base. Little patches of light a good distance away ought to be the Chantries of their adversaries, and then...

This *thing* drifts across the sweep beam's path: big and blobby and bright, wobbling off towards the Techies' base. To return to the cocoa analogy, one of the bubbles has veered off course and attacked the chocolate mud. The blip pauses, seems to look around a second and when it moves on, the glowing dot has a smiley face.

Marauders are living reality warps, and the problem question—a Zen koan of Oracular proportion—is *why?* Or, as the less enlightened ask, "How in Dante's Hell can they screw reality without Doxing themselves out of existence?"

Once upon a time, there was no such thing as a Marauder. Wyld-inclined mages did exist, of course, but they were ordinary oddballs or perfectly normal Dreamspeakers. The Traditions believe that the change (whatever it was) occurred in the midst of the Age of Enlightenment. This is not a bad theory, as theories about the Marauders go, but the truth is that at some unknown time during the Medieval period (Marauder watchers agree it has to have been *before* the Renaissance), a few mages crossed over to permanent madness and (though it was hard to tell at the time) immunity to Paradox. Marauders only became visible as time went on and static reality crystalized further, and this is the source of the Traditions' error.

The Inmates

*One flew East and one flew West,
And one flew over the Cuckoo's nest.*

—Children's Rhyme

Cuckoos' nests have nothing to do with it...but before we tell you *how*, we're going to make you sit through *who*.

The Technocracy, in its non-infinite wisdom, has identified "risk factors" by which they hope, in time, to isolate the virus involved in the Marauders' "disease." At last count these included: direct contact with a Marauder, long-term contact with Garou, extended isolation in Marauder-frequented areas, Orphan status, the study of Marauders in any great detail, the study of Chaos likewise, astronomy (always read with a stern look in the direction of the Void Engineers, who suffer the greatest infection rates among the Techies), a too-rigid routine (at which everyone rolls their eyes and the Iteration Xers look distinctly uncomfortable), post-traumatic-stress disorder, measles, long-term assignment to any Horizon Realm *except* Null-B, high sugar intake, postings in Third World nations, fraternization with Tradition mages and flowered wallpaper.

This list is, of course, completely useless. In the first place, the Technocrats cannot possibly hope to eliminate every risk. Void Engineers *must* study the Tellurian, the Conventions' forces *must* occupy conquered caerns and Realms, the troops *must* continue to war against the opposition, scientists (even the ones conducting this study) *must* capture Marauders, *must* examine Chaos mathematics and *must* observe Garou.

Second, there is some doubt as to the validity of the researchers' conclusions. Thousands of Technocrats and Traditionalists grew up with flowered wallpaper and show no ill effects. Progenitors with forty years experience in Marauder vivisection continue on, as healthy as they began, next to five-year students that go mad before ever being exposed. Dreamspeakers who have actual conversations with the freaks are perfectly fine, and Euthanoi that never leave the Chantry start holding Unbirthday parties. There's no real correlation.

Last, but certainly not least: this list is inaccurate. Mages, particularly Technomancers, frequently *do* become Marauders because of Marauder or were-creature contact. Orphans, astronomers, chaos mathematicians and coggy, over-regulated It Xers *are* the most likely to cross over in times of stress or contemplation, but none of this is necessary. The truth is that *anybody* —Sleeper, Orphan, Master—with the right temperament (and the right Avatar) will go Marauder no matter how carefully they are guarded and watched. Suspicion is actually the most common catalyst among mages.

But the Progenitors are absolutely right about the wallpaper. Really.

How

Nature must obey necessity.

—Brutus, Julius Caesar

This is the secret. This is the absolute origin of the Marauders and their near-perfect immunity to Paradox, which half the mages in the Tellurian would give an arm to know. Pay attention.

When a mage decides, consciously or not, to become a Marauder, they take their accumulated Paradox and "wrap" it around their own mind, leaving their Avatar and body free. The result is a *permanent* state of Quiet insanity from which the Marauder cannot escape. This Quiet cannot be reduced with Quintessence, cannot be eradicated by the darker sources of Tass and cannot be affected by concerned telepaths (though they may enter it, if they wish, with no more than the usual ill effects). It is a perpetual walking mindscape where nothing is resolved. The mage, willingly or unwillingly, has become dynamism's pawn.

The obvious tradeoff is that the Marauder is now virtually immune to Paradox. The Quiet "universe" that envelops him acts as a shield against further reality conflicts. (The mechanics for this are given in the Mad Magick section of this chapter.)

The other incredibly important benefit is that the mage's Avatar stays sane. And because all Marauders, knowingly or not, work for dynamic change, this is a huge advantage. The Avatar is free to direct the mage towards truly important goals without too much interference from the conscious mind (as in the case of the Mexican Marauders mentioned in **The Chaos Factor**: regardless of their personal opinion of Samuel Haight, their Avatars were well aware that Haight was Wyrmbait, and the mages acted accordingly... eventually). If the Avatar and the mind are in consort rather than opposition, the Marauder becomes still stronger. Again, the Mad Magick section gives more detail on this phenomenon.

Now that you know, remember: these facts are almost completely unknown in the World of Darkness and *cannot* be discovered by any Awakened for more than a few moments. These are usually the few moments directly before the mage becomes a Marauder herself. If in that time the mage does *not* choose to join the ranks of chaos, she forgets her discovery. If she tries to inform anyone else (and those who become Marauders rarely feel this inclination), she forgets immediately, though she may be given another chance later on. If she becomes a Marauder, she forgets, though her Avatar may remind her of the truth from time to time. The point is, whatever fragment of Eternal Dynamism inspires the change keeps a very close rein on its secrets.

Ideals of the Twisted

Can you pass judgment on a hurricane?

—Jonathan Francis Gore, Corax

Their philosophy, when they have any, tends to run something like this: Active Dynamism (read as personal chaos, zöoterrorism, the tactical nuclear bombing of Technocracy bases) leads to the downfall of organized, static thought. The downfall of organized, static thought (read as lots of dead sticks-in-the-mud) leads to greater individual freedom. Greater individual freedom leads (one way or another) to the Marauder's own personal goals and Ascensions (or so they believe deep down in their messy little hearts). The fact that all of these insane Quiets spread out and overlapping would make life pretty darn unlivable for the average Joe simply doesn't enter into their calculations, and if it did, they'd be sure to point out (if they could still hear your objections) that the Technocracy is killing off humanity's *soul*, and wouldn't a little ordinary death make a pleasant change?

Popular wisdom among the Traditions and the Technocracy has it that the Marauders are all rabid medievalists. This is not true; it is merely the loose reality that was present during the Mythic Age that they wish to regain. Many of the Marauders are not aware of this themselves.

To accomplish this, the Umbral Underground emphasizes Active Dynamism; the Bai Dai go in for genocide. The results, until now, have been similar and not particularly different in comparison to the independent efforts...of which there are an awful lot. One can't go around stereotyping Marauders. There are too many varieties.

For that reason, it is impossible to list off their opinions of the other factions roaming the Tellurian. Their usual allies are their critters, the various species of shapeshifters (particularly Gurahl, or werebears), some Dreamspeakers and Cultists of Ecstasy (though neither Tradition would ever admit it), the Garou (also shapeshifters, but as the largest faction they deserve their own mention) and Gangrel vampires.

One sect, however, receives their complete and vitriolic enmity. Any Marauder, regardless of Quiet, creed or philosophy, will do her level best to utterly destroy the Nephandi. Any other creatures of corruption with which the Marauders come in contact will be attacked after the Nephandi have perished or fled. (This is not a knee-jerk reaction with every Marauder; there are those who can retreat and plan an ambush for ten years if necessary.) Oblivion, corruption and the Wyrms are the Marauders' avowed enemies, and any *barabbi* who wishes to remain concealed is better off not approaching the crazies and their allies.



Quiet



*He says I suffer from delusion
But I'm so confident I'm sane
It can't be an optical illusion
So how can you explain
Shadows in the rain*

—Sting, "Shadows in the Rain"

Madness is a personal thing.

For simplicity of language, the Marauder's Quiet may be referred to as delusions, beliefs, insanities, etc. However, it is *vital*ly important to remember that Quiet represents a real and different reality centered on the Marauder. In most cases, a reality of one, but *true* and *sane* none the less.

Psychosis occurs when the mind's conception of the world differs from reality, and since the Marauders define their own realities, they are the only people in the Tellurian who cannot possibly be psychotic by the dictionary definition. Of course, from the point of view of an outside observer, every last one of them is completely insane, living in what Marauder-watchers call the Ultimate Psychotic State (UPS for short).

This is why even the Butcher Street Regulars, (see below) who are on the whole a pretty sympathetic and likable bunch, are no less than five people who have killed, can kill and will kill anyone, anywhere, anytime and anyhow with absolutely no apparent provocation whatsoever, and any Marauder could do the same, and worse if she thought it necessary. Marauders can do things that would make a Sabbath vampire vomit without knowing that they have acted at all.

The Marauder scale of Quiet differs somewhat from the ordinary range; a serious derangement in a Traditional mage may be considerably less so for a Marauder. The number listed in the character write-ups in this chapter has more to do with severance from reality and the difficulty the Marauder has in dealing with the static world.

For example, a Marauder who believed he was Napoleon in modern day would have (for a Marauder) moderate problems with reality. If he thought he was Napoleon in France and at court, the Quiet rating would go up because that reality and static reality mesh badly. It's difficult to cope when your throne room is actually a McDonald's (though the Marauder's subconscious sense of humor would probably insist on the bathroom instead), and the attempt to cope usually upsets the conformity enforcers in the area.

If he thought he was Napoleon reborn doing undercover work and therefore keeping a low profile, the rating would be much lower, and if the Marauder simply believed that someone *else* was Napoleon reborn (assuming he kept his mouth shut), the Quiet would be as low as it can get.

Marauder Quiets

This chart is not an absolute; many delusions or combinations of delusions will not fit precisely into these categories.

Quiet Delusions

- 1 One constant, simple difference between inner and outer realities. Very few Marauders are this sane.
- 2-3 The Marauder's universe is different in a few basic ways, but he can still communicate with and understand the "real" world.
- 4-6 The Marauder's world has little to do with reality, but most of the important events and people she knows are "translated" for her by her Avatar.
- 7-9 Communication between the Marauder and any non-telepaths becomes almost impossible. Powerful Marauders at this state wander through the world, or more frequently the Umbra, like a black hole on a string. Reality tears where they go.
- 10 Static Reality cannot support the Marauder. He drops out of any Realm he visits and drifts through the Umbra aimlessly. No one knows what happens next.

Recovery

Mad mages can recover from Paradox-induced madness by adapting their reality to the one around them. For every additional point of Quiet over her initial rating, the character must spend a week adjusting to some common reality by interacting with others (including other Marauders) who do not share the delusion. This does not cure the insanity; the mage has just better learned to cope. The base rating is effectively permanent, set by the nature of the madness. Sinking deeper without an adjustment phase sets loose so much dynamism that the Marauder becomes effectively useless, staring into space or becoming one with it.

Loud

I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.

—Hamlet

So, one asks oneself, could a Marauder, if the Mythic Age balance returns, become sane again? In other words, "What happens if a Marauder's Quiet becomes reality?"

First, it has to be considered: is this *at all* likely? For instance, would a certain Brother Jonathan ever *actually* become the Antichrist and lead Ragnarok to the glory of the Frost Giants? Uh-uh. He's a Marauder, and like it or not, he lives on the Wyld side. Frost Giants probably fall on the Wyrmy third of the apple, and he's so obnoxious no sentient in its right mind would ever follow him. However, Robert Davenport (again, see below) might eventually be powerful enough to resurrect his wife and child and even return them to the Earth, if Chaos won the Ascension War.



Second, does the Marauder actually care? It might require an act of will to realize that you *can* get off the merry-go-round (if you know it's there at all). If you're more interested in the brass ring, why bother?

Third, and probably most important, are whatever Chaos spirits that inspired the change at all benevolent? Would they, (or he or she or it) be more likely to reward faithful pawns or hoard them as reserve pieces for the

Paradox Backlash is rolled as for normal mages, the number of dice used in the botched effect. Roll for backlash as normal, but the effects are generalized *and do not necessarily affect the Marauder!* If a caster-only situation comes up, ignore it; the higher level of Quiet is the only result. If a Paradox Realm or Spirit is involved, players and bystanders might be affected (with or without the Marauder). Naturally, to the Marauder the Realm is like any other, and the Spirit is just a monster. If he can see them at all, that is.

A higher Quiet interferes with the mage's ability to interact with everything else. Going steadily madder is not a good thing, even for a Marauder...

Example: Cleo Thornbath, with a Quiet of four, blows her roll while summoning a woolly mammoth. A double botch. In front of Sleepers. Bad news. If Cleo were not a Marauder, she would get 10 Paradox points (Life 5x2) and possibly incur a large backlash. Because of her Quiet, however, she is immune to up to 12 points. Nothing happens to her...

10 dice is a sizable backlash. The Storyteller rolls against difficulty 6 and comes up with seven successes (Yow!). This manifests in a really nasty spirit, who arrives a turn or two later. Any mages in the area had best beware!

Foci

Foci are another problem. Technocracy and Tradition mages get rather frustrated trying to "declaw" Marauders. Not only are a large number of the crazies Orphans, but even the ones who need such things are tricky to deal with. Strip the Marauder naked and lock them in an empty room—if they're powerful enough, *if* their Quiet keeps them from noticing you've done it, and *if* they still have something they *think* is their sword/showstone/friendly pebble—you've still got a tiger by the tail. Of course, it works the other way. If the Marauder believes she's lost something, she can no more use it than think straight, even if it's actually stapled to her head.

A mage who goes Wyld after her initiation into some group keeps the foci she originally needed to work her magick, regardless of her Arete, if she needed any when she turned. An Orphan Marauder needs no focus unless her madness dictates that she does (many do, but not all).

Spheres

Spirit is the primary Sphere for most Marauders, unless they began their Awakening powerful in some other magick. Orphan Marauders find advancement rather difficult, as is usual, but tend to pick up the Spirit Sphere quickly. Part of this can be attributed to friendly Garou, other patchwork kin and Dreamspeaker allies, but one theory has it that their Avatars are partially responsible. Surely no Sphere would be more easily communicated between soul and soul or from spirit to mind. This is one reason, say the watchers, that zöoterrorism is so frequent. That the Marauders might be organized enough to teach and distribute spirit names over the length and breadth of the cosmos is too ridiculous to consider.



Because Marauders don't gain accumulated-cooperative Paradox from working-together botches, they are most effective when working in groups. Fortunately for the Tellurian as we know it, Marauders are even more fractious than normal mages and are usually incapable of teaching each other anything.

Methods

To say that Marauders use conscious tactics would be an overstatement; their methodology seems to be "Hey, whatever works..." Nevertheless, the chaos mages employ three time-proven methods to make life difficult for the Tellurian at large...

Destabilization

Look at me!! I am pilot error, I am fetal distress, I am the random chromosome...I am complete and total madness...I am fear...

— J. O'Barr, *The Crow*

When some sort of big change is in the offing, Marauders often jump into the mix to force as much chaos as possible. **Loom of Fate** and **The Chaos Factor** show Marauders doing their best to make a bad situation worse for the guardians of order. This tactic has, to be blunt, royally pissed both Council and Technocratic mages off. Many short alliances have been struck to drive the chaos mages away. These partnerships serve both order and chaos; the Mad Ones are usually driven away, but the shock waves caused when the alliances inevitably fail serves long-term discord.

Destablizing Marauders usually pick some champion or cause to throw their weight behind. This "patron" is often pivotal in some large conflict, is often a Sleeper rather than a mage and usually remains oblivious to his "helpers." Speculations abound about "fairy godmothers" and wise men who helped some prince or princess, but such tales probably provide more inspiration than history.

Modern-day destabilizers cause massive (and often violent) disruptions. They seek out powerful foes and trash them in the flashiest way possible. Many are said to have adapted old certamen contests into wild duels involving highly vulgar magick. Others jump into a fray and twist time and space until huge Paradox backlashes occur. The Bai Dai are fond of this latter tactic, and are responsible for much of the Marauders' bad reputation.

Infiltration

*Fire they cried
So evil must die
And yields are good
So men pull back hoods and smile*
— XTC, "Sacrificial Bonfire"

Especially sane Marauders sometimes masquerade as members of some other group. If they can work this infiltration into their particular Quiet, these subtle mages become very efficient time bombs. Diacalaton, the Null-B infiltrator from **The Book of Chantries**, exemplifies this type of Marauder.



Inner dynamism short-circuits any training, indoctrination or implantation that an infiltrator undergoes. Such mages often pick up their targets' foci, dogma and paradigm and work them into their personal delusions. They must be careful, however, to avoid vulgar magick. Their fellows may become suspicious if the newcomer gets away with too much, and backlashes can push a nice stable Quiet into overload.

This tactic is the most hazardous among the three common Marauder methods. These mad mages have a hard time controlling the chaos within them and frequently blow their cover. While this causes some really impressive battles, the infiltrator usually kicks the proverbial bucket in the process. Infiltration, then, is a game for Marauders with strong wills and suicidal tendencies.

Zooterrorism

Alas, the bitter jest of fate—my greatest death-trap shot to squadoo...all because I couldn't make the little guppies smile!

—The Joker, *Mad Love*

Marauders of the conscientious, crusading variety have one particular quirk which makes them feared the length and breadth of the Tellurian: zooterrorism.

The general idea is to get the Mythic Age to fight for itself. Marauders go into the Umbra and find mythic beasts, learn their true names (by force or by friendship, according to the Marauder's temperament) and later call them to Earth to fight or assist against the forces of Order and Corruption.

This is normally accomplished through one of the following Effects:

- **Correspondence 5** (direct transport from point A to point B); not often used because of its difficulty, but convenient if the mage doesn't want to be there for the fight. The Gauntlet must still be breached at some point.

- **Life 5, Prime 2** (actually creating this critter before your very eyes); again, the power involved is considerable, and few Marauders are capable of this Effect. Naturally, unless Spirit, Mind and Matter are used in their appropriate proportions, the beast will be temporary and dumb as hell. Even then, such creatures tend to be short-lived; reality still creeps in around the edges (see "Unbelief" in Chapter Two). The Marauder will also have to spend her full time controlling it unless she splits her dice pool or makes use of Time magick.

- **Life 3, Prime 2** (creating simple forms of life) is rather easier than the first two methods. This technique is limited by the scarcity of invertebrate legendary creatures. However, for those with the know-how, a giant squid (of the "furlongs in length" variety) is a reliable and friendly ally.

- **Mind 4 (Control Minds)** can be used to keep visiting living anachronisms in line, keep in contact with intelligent ones stationed on Earth or to convince watchers that a creature has appeared out of nowhere. Marauders know, none better, the appearance of chimerae and chaldarii, and



the level of detail this effect can be given is overpowering. Because of the crazies' reputation for zoological warfare, even Technomancers who see through the illusion tend to hesitate, and of course, any Sleepers in the area who accept the vision will freak.

• **Spirit 4 (Control Gauntlet)** is absolutely essential in bringing over low-intelligence or less-magical creatures. While powerful Umbral spirit animals can cross the Gauntlet on their own steam, not all are able, and even those that can may have difficulty in high-Gauntlet areas, no matter how much they are needed or willing to help. If the creature is unwilling, the Marauder must breach the barriers and force the transfer himself, a practice risky then and later, because of the animal's resentment.

• **Spirit 2 (Call Spirit)**. This is the most common method. It's easy if you know the necessary name, it doesn't require much skill, and a creature willing to accept the call *and* capable of crossing the Gauntlet all by itself—well, that's one hell of an ally. The important thing in this case is to be on the creature's good side and keep it healthy (well-fed, supplied with Quintessence and, in the case of fighting beasts, healed up after each assignment). The Spirit Lore Ability (see Appendix) is useful, almost essential, when using this Effect.

However, no matter how much a Marauder may like his little pet, it's incredibly unlikely that any mythic beasts will live in an Earthly Chantry. There simply isn't that kind of Tass available anymore. At the utmost, there might be a resident sapient jerboa (like the kind in the encyclopedia but trickier) serving as a familiar. The Umbral Chantries, on the other hand...

Characters



We aren't contractually tied down to rationality! There is no sanity clause! So when you find yourself locked into an unpleasant train of thought, heading for the places where the screaming is unbearable, remember there's always madness. Madness is the emergency exit...

— The Joker (again!), *Batman: The Killing Joke*

In addition to the infamous Butcher Street Regulars, this section includes a variety of Marauder characters of varying degrees of sanity and violence, as well as the beasts they so love to play with.

The Butcher Street Regulars

Robert Davenport

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Director

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Never

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4 (surgeon), Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4 (analysis), Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Expression 2, Intuition 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Leadership 4 (Marauders), Melee 1, Research 2, Stealth 2, Technology 1, Computer 3, Cosmology 3, Enigmas 4 (Chaos), Investigation 1, Law 1, Linguistics 2 (English, Latin, French), Medicine 4 (Vascular), Occult 3, Science 4 (Physiology)

Backgrounds: Allies (Johnny Gore among them) 3, Avatar 2, Destiny 5

Spheres: Forces 2, Life 2, Mind 1, Matter 2, Prime 2, Spirit 4

Willpower: 9

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 12



Background: Robert Davenport, B.A., B.S., M.D., was a cardiovascular surgeon and physiologist working on chaos problems in heart defibrillation. His studies attracted the attention of the Technocracy, and in due time their recruiters approached him.

He walked out of the "introductory conference" appalled by their methodology and ethics, though the paper read was only the tip of *that* iceberg. His contact followed him in an attempt at persuasion that completely backfired: Davenport left more repulsed than ever, guessing quite accurately their goals and (more to the point) their tactics. He drove straight home, and without stopping to pack, the family left for a cabin in the woods near Utica, NY. They were too late.

The passenger seats were completely crushed by the first semi. Davenport, unscathed for the moment, had a scant second to react—to see the recruiter gloating on the corner, *all* the lights in the intersection green, and midtown industrial traffic bearing down on the remains of the car. It was enough. Davenport became both mage and Marauder in that instant, tried unsuccessfully to reverse the collision, and the Tech agent died hideously in the Paradox backlash.

Today the good doctor is the leader of the Butcher Street Regulars, and the somewhat reluctant web center of Umbral Underground activities on Earth.

Quiet: Base of 2. Davenport usually merely believes his family to be alive. At higher Paradox, his wife (Maraya) and daughter (Karen) manifest, particularly in the Umbra, and twice the reality differential has warped his surroundings into a fairy-tale castle from a story he was writing for the girl. His Avatar appears as his wife, which, when he realizes it, annoys him.

Image: Robert Davenport appears to be in his early thirties, but since taking over the Regulars, lines of care have settled around his eyes and forehead. His hair is cut sensibly and graying slightly at the temples. He tends towards conservative dress, but believes that whatever his current project requires is more important than maintaining a personal style.

Roleplaying Notes: Davenport speaks with authority, and his leadership and charisma are his most striking traits. Keep your calm no matter what, but remember that he believes deeply in his cause, and is very emotional at heart. He is always willing to try reasoning with Tradition mages, *if* there is time, and *if* the characters are rational.

Senorita Abraxas

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Loner

Essence: Pattern

Convention: ex-New World Order

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Drive 3, Firearms 4, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Technology 3, Computer 3, Cosmology 2, Culture 1, Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Law 2, Linguistics 3 (Spanish, English, French, German), Occult 3

Backgrounds: Arcane 3, Destiny 2, Avatar 1, Talisman 3

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 1, Forces 3, Life 1, Mind 3, Matter 3, Prime 2, Spirit 1, Time 1

Willpower: 8

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 6

Background: Born in provincial Spain, the girl who would later become Agent Abraxas of the New World Order practically lived at her grandfather's knee. She would listen for hours to tales from his military service, his travels and the history of her country. Abraxas grew up a fierce patriot and, after his death, a rabid reader.

Her studies won her a scholarship to go to university in Madrid. Her performance there attracted NWO attention, and by the age of twenty-one, she was a full-fledged member of their espionage division. Her superiors expected amazing things from her before long, and even her peers grudgingly acknowledged her skill and potential.

Of course, these same peers were already looking for a place to stick the knife. Her best friend informed a supervisor of Abraxas' obsession with Spanish legends, signifying an unhealthy level of nationalism, and her meteoric rise



was slowed. No doubt time and observation would have vindicated her, but the atmosphere of suspicion from those she served unnerved her, and her efficiency went down.

Abraxas' Mentor arranged for her to be given the Marauder assignment as a chance to prove her worth and loyalty. And, he reasoned, if she failed, no harm was done. An Adept of that level and clearance was practically expendable.

But as Davenport is fond of saying, when the Technocracy sent agent Abraxas, they gave the BSR exactly what they needed. The Marauders' weakness was technology and object-magic—and then Abraxas was pushed into their laps. Now they have a weaponsmith and a technical expert, and the spy is happy for the first time since her grandfather's passing...incredibly deadly and ruthless, but happy.

Quiet: Base of 3. Abraxas' delusion is unusual in that it concerns one thing only, but it's a sizable one: she believes Davenport to be El Cid.

Image: The Señorita's looks are entirely average for her country: brown hair, brown eyes, middling skin tone and a rather nondescript prettiness that's hard to describe and even harder to recognize by someone else's. Her photograph looks like a million other women's, her blood type is O, and even her fingerprints are of the most common variety. She can stand out in a crowd, but prefers conformist clothes and commonplace jewelry. Even her previous masters have trouble finding her, the more so because her Talisman (previously their Device) is a simple gold chain that alters her "aura" to appear as a Sleeper's.

Roleplaying Notes: Your single-minded devotion to the Marauder cause is rivaled only by your unrequited love for Davenport. You know your passion to be hopeless, of course: you've met his wife. Keep a business-like attitude in all of your dealings, and if you use force or persuasion do so minimally and with clinical precision.

You are occasionally irritated by the calibre of your allies, particularly idiots like Mr. Nicholas, but so far, your common purpose has prevented any open confrontations.

Lord Ex (The Lord High Executioner, a.k.a. Richard Thomlinson)

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Jester

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: Nope

Attributes: Strength 4 (Wiry), Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Expression 3, Intuition 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Melee 4 (sabre), Stealth 3, Survival 1, Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 1 (English, French)



Backgrounds: Not a thing.

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 1, Prime 1, Spirit 1, Time 1

Willpower: 7

Arete: 1

Quintessence: 0

Background: By day, Richard Thomlinson was a Victorian-era actor, neither outstandingly bad nor remarkably good, but with a vitality admired by the theater-going public. By night, however, he left his rooms cloaked and masked as Lord Ex with sabre in hand, ready to do battle with injustice wherever he found it. Surprisingly enough, he was excellent at this second profession, and many evildoers were brought to light through his efforts.

Unfortunately, humans were not the only bad guys in turn-of-the-century London. While on the trail of another murderer, he stumbled across a vampire's trail and witnessed the final confrontation between the creature and his Euthanatos pursuers. The scene was enough to bring him through the curtain, but in the trauma of Awakening, he suppressed the memory and went directly from static human reality to the comfortable fog of a static Marauder Quiet. The two Euthanatos (unaware of this) took him to a local Chantry for instruction. The cabal, of course, could teach him nothing, but found him remarkably useful nonetheless.

Davenport has no idea how Lord Ex arrived in the twentieth century, but theorizes that he came forward with a time-jumper Cultist from the same period.

Quiet: Base of 5. Lord Ex's delusions cover just about everything: the world simply is nineteenth century England.

Image: Thomlinson is a dashing young man, impeccably (if anachronistically) dressed for any occasion. Think morning suits and Victorian frock coats, tweeds for the country, well-crafted hats for the town. His hair is dark with rusty highlights; his eyes are nearly black, with long lashes and pleasantly mysterious brows. He just tops 6'1", but is slightly built with it. As Lord Ex in full gear, (i.e. opera cloak, top hat, domino mask, sabre, silver-handled pistols and white rose in his buttonhole) this height can be starkly intimidating, but Robert Thomlinson never looms.

Roleplaying Notes: Be charming, be suave, be dashing, and be slightly sad. Thomlinson has seen mankind at its worst and its best, and knows that people are just, well, people. Do what you have to do to protect the weak from the strong, but do it more in sorrow than in anger. (And remember, no matter what happens, that Thomlinson is an actor in Victorian London. If the PC's and the BSR raid a crack house, you see an opium den. If the BSR meet to work out a plan, you're at a dress rehearsal.)

Mr. Nicholas

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Caregiver

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: None



Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 1, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Expression, Intuition 1, Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Technology 2, Computer 3, Cosmology 2, Linguistics 2 (French, Spanish), Medicine 1, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Avatar 2, Dream 1

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 2, Life 1, Mind 3, Matter 2, Prime 2, Spirit 2

Willpower: 6

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 3

Background: Completely unknown. He supposes he must have come from somewhere, but can't see the point in finding out. Davenport has made a few inquiries, but so far the only clue is Nicholas' disconcerting ability to drive a sleigh.

Quiet: Nicholas' delusion is particularly tragic: he truly believes the world to be a good and happy place, that all's well that ends well, and that this is the best of all possible universes—and this is the World of Darkness, campers. The actual rating tends to hover around 3 and skyrocket on a regular basis—the universe frequently puts stress on Mr. Nicholas' views

Image: A jolly, rather red-faced older man. He is balding, white-haired and bearded, with a slight weight problem and an eerie, high-pitched laugh. He bowls badly and wears his team shirt, loose jeans and red, white and green shoes most of the time.

Roleplaying Notes: Make optimistic statements at the worst possible times. It can't really be as bad as everyone thinks, and it's your duty to keep 'em looking on the bright side. Giggle before you tell what you mean to be a joke.

Mother Goose

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Caregiver

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: None

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 3, Expression 3, Intuition 1, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms (Shotgun) 4, Meditation 1, Stealth 1, Cosmology 1, Culture 3, Enigmas 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Spirit Names 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Arcane 1, Avatar 2, Library 1

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Life 5, Mind 2, Prime 2, Spirit 4, Time 2

Willpower: 5

Arete: 5



Quintessence: 2

Background: The tragic victim of elder abuse, Mother Goose (Nanna or Mama Goose to her friends and flock) submitted passively to her 20-nothing, drug-dealing grandson for seven years after his invasion of her house. Her only resistance was vocal appeal to his woefully non-existent conscience, and as she was kept locked in a filthy attic room with no windows, this was the only variety she could muster.

On the day he struck and killed his battered wife—the only member of that amebic and depraved house to ever feed or care for the old lady—she had finally had it. Why couldn't things be like they used to be? She'd grown up farming, believing in haunted wells and Good Folk, learning "hedge magick" from cousins for superstition's sake. The people had cared, had known right from wrong, had been...well...better. She reached far into those desiccated memories, past the silly charms and protections, made the leap into Waking, and in a surge of realization, called out to a bonfire she had once dreamed spoke.

The arrival of the salamander destroyed the house and all its criminal inmates; the resulting Paradox pushed Mother Goose past the limit. Her adjustment to chaos was sudden, but not traumatic, and she lost very little in the change. She does have a mild amnesia regarding her years in the attic, but whether this is Quiet or natural is unknown.

Today Mother Goose is the archetypal zöoterrorist. To date she has conjured up everything from griffins to cockatrice to xiphii (giant intelligent swordfish). Keep this in mind if she gets into something sticky: she has absolutely no qualms about using her friends on Earth, and not a few of them can cross the Gauntlet on their own.

Quiet: Base of 3. Mother Goose has an "ordinary" Quiet, and Traditionalists she meets frequently mistake her for a Dreamspeaker suffering from too much Paradox. Her world isn't very different, but it does have missing elements and extra pieces. All of the bits that change are the mundane variety: tables, chairs, trees, subways, people, etc. Mother Goose's Quiet rarely increases; this lady and her animal friends can cope with almost anything.

Image: A short, baggy black grandmother with a sweet face and short gray hair. Mother Goose likes respectable print dresses, sensible shoes, and the kind of pantyhose that cover your legs, dearie. And wool stockings in winter, too. She wears a head scarf on windy days, and a sixties-cut greenish-beige wool coat with lots of pockets over everything else. She doesn't care for the color, but it's the only thing she owns that can conceal her sawed-off shotgun. The outside pockets are stuffed with doggy biscuits, goldfish crackers, sunflower seeds and pet treats of every description. The inside pockets hold sewing notions, a first aid kit, and ammunition.

Roleplaying Notes: Treat everyone as if they were your long-lost grandchild. In your heart you've always wanted to be a fairy godmother, and now is your chance. You like everybody—except for Nephandi, Men-in-black, Black Spiral Dancers, Bai Dai and anyone who hurts your critter friends. In fact, your judgment of other people is based largely on how they react when you summon things. Traditionalists you run across will even find you willing to compromise, occasionally, on the whole Chaos-uber-alles thing—the new Mythic Age can wait (just a little while) until the world is ready.

Other Marauders

The Islington Horror

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Loner

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Unknown

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Streetwise 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Cosmology 1, Culture 2, Linguistics 6 (at least; English, Spanish, French, German, Latin, Romansch and Japanese are all the BSR have heard from him), Medicine 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Arcane 3, Destiny 3

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 4, Forces 3, Life 3, Mind 5, Matter 3, Prime 4, Spirit 4, Time 2



Willpower: 3

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 7

Background: Lost in the mists of history. Though the Horror is recognized vaguely throughout Europe's occult community, nothing definite is known about his past. However, Robert Davenport once found a woodcut broadsheet from the sixteenth century offering peeks at the Devil of Lyons—who was shown in a crude illustration that looked much like Islington.

For the moment, at least, the Horror is content (if the word may be used of him) to drift from country to country erratically, sometimes mutely joining Marauder mages and cabals, but more often simply slouching about the less favored parts of cities. Many weaker Marauders owe him their life. No matter what his Quiet, he always perceives the agents of Order and Corruption as the enemy.

His recent wanderings have been confined to the British Isles, and a loose kind of friendship seems to be forming between the Horror and Mother Goose (whom he once allowed to touch him). Davenport is in hopes that the Horror will join the Regulars eventually.

Quiet: The Horror seems to jump from delusion to delusion, each one terrifying and realistic. In one particular week the BSR believe him to have conjured two Nazi camps, Tiannanmen Square, the L.A. riots, the Black Plague and an unidentified death march. His hobgoblins are incredibly nasty and have done more for his unsavory reputation than any of his own mad, blind attacks.

Image: The Horror is an apparent burn victim of uncertain age, race, gender, etc. He (or just possibly she) is believed to be of sufficient power to heal himself if he cared to or realized that he could. He fights off any attempts to help him, heal him, bathe him or clothe him in anything but his own gray flappy rags. He is grimy and stinks.

Roleplaying Notes: Say little—in your mind's eye you are frequently incarcerated, and several hundred years of steady oppression and fear have granted you the prisoner's silence. Do little—one of the guards might notice you, and the visible targets are always shot first. This is your philosophy, and for the most part you stick to it. But sometimes, when those around you need your help, you can't keep yourself from acting. It's a bad habit which will probably get you killed, but... (actually, Islington does a lot: the Mongol horde that Johnny Gore witnessed sacking the Pentex plant was composed entirely of the Horror's hobgoblins. He thought his village was burning at their hands and had hidden in a water barrel.)

Barrister Martins

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Conniver

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: None

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3



Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Expression 3, Intuition 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4, Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Melee 1, Research 2, Stealth 1, Cosmology 1, Culture 2, Enigmas 2, Investigation 3, Law 4, Linguistics 1 (English and Spanish), Occult 3

Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Avatar 1, Destiny 1, Influence 2

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Forces 4, Life 1, Mind 2, Matter 3, Prime 1, Spirit 1

Willpower: 7

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 6

Background: During Glen Martin's third heart attack, he had a vision: the world was not as it seemed, and reality was as tissue paper to one of strong enough will. Unfortunately, as he had this revelation, his heart stopped entirely, and he died...or so he thinks.

All good lawyers go to hell: this is practically an article of faith for the American psyche. Naturally enough, Martins went to hell. As he is fond of saying, he was a very good lawyer.

Doomed to defend the innocent for eternity and lose every case, Martins retreated from the "world" in a kind of despair. He couldn't escape, his powers were feeble and he couldn't kill himself, and the best he could do was take his jailers out of the picture for a year or two. Everyone he could see was damned. The Masters of Hell resurrect whomever they want whenever they want, and their tortures are horrible.

In fact, "they," for a while at least, were Progenitors puzzled by his case: the Umbral Underground intercepted very strange reports from the Chantry involved, and rescued a good many Marauders, normals, dazed Tradition mages and the odd Garou found wandering senseless in the woods nearby. Some of these identified Martins as a fellow prisoner, believed he was responsible for their escape and were at a complete loss as to why. The means by which he got them out is completely unknown.

Three or four years after his death, a miracle occurred. Martins walked into the courtroom as usual. It was Monday, it was audibly raining somewhere beyond the walls and he had no memory of anything since the last session. He proceeded resignedly to his place and fell instantly in love with the prisoner he was to defend. She was beautiful, she was bravely frightened and—by definition—she was innocent. As the bailiff called the court to rise, he knew he had to save her.

"First case: His Infernal Highness, Emperor of the Seven Hells, Twenty-three-and-a-half Dominions, and Gehenna Majoris versus Prisoner KF54217-A4," called the clerk.

Martins seized his chance. He knew that if the trial began, the lady was lost. "Milord! There seems to be a slight irregularity. The prisoner is not in court."

The demon frowned. "It sits beside you, man."

"Your Honor, this woman cannot be the prisoner," he said, seizing the file that sat, coincidentally, before her. "Her papers are in order: this is the legal secretary I requisitioned last February. Where," he demanded, "is my defendant?"

And to his immense surprise, the bluff worked. Miss Zhao played her part excellently, the judge acquiesced, and since then, Martins admits things have been looking up. His office "arrived" in the vicinity, he can walk to and from it, there are rumors of a new judge coming to the bench, and Miss Zhao seems rather pleased with the prospect of spending the rest of her eternity at his side.

Quiet: 4 at least (he believes he's *dead*, he believes he's in *hell*), probably an 8 before the arrival of Miss Zhao. She hopes his madness will recede still further.

Image: Martins' hair is thinning, his face is lined, and his once well-padded frame is lean and gaunt. Nevertheless, his gray eyes are piercing, his voice is as strong and (dare we say it) virile as it ever was, and his new hope lends dignity and determination to a weak chin and unprepossessing features. He wears suits of every respectable color, ties of Chinese silk and carries habitually a charcoal-gray, calfskin briefcase.

Roleplaying Notes: Never let your guard down, never commit yourself when you can be vague, never sign without reading first, etc. Demons are a constant problem, and maybe some people are in hell on trumped-up charges, but on most of them the sins of life are written all too clearly. Unless you once defended the person in question (i.e. rescued them from somewhere), you trust them only with adequate proof of their alliances or after they have been vouched for by former prisoners.

Miss Zhao

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Essence: Dynamic

Tradition: ex-Akashic Brother

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Do 3, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Intuition 1, Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Meditation 2, Melee 4, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Computer 2, Culture (Mandarin) 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 1, Law 2, Linguistics 3 (English, Cantonese, Korean), Medicine 1, Occult 2

Backgrounds: Mentor 3, Avatar 2, Destiny 2, Past Life 2, Node 2

Spheres: Entropy 1, Forces 1, Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 1, Spirit 2, Time 2

Willpower: 7

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 5





Background: Two years after Haixia Zhao was brought through the Curtain by her Mentor, she left him to seek a different path. Unlike any Orphan Marauder, she knew exactly what she did, exactly what to do, and exactly who suggested that she do it. Very deliberately, she took on Paradox, and as carefully wrapped it round herself to leave her Avatar free. When the elderly Akashic brother returned, he found only her note: "I have looked into what will be, and in none of these futures—not the Technocrats', not any of the Traditions', not even yours, Teacher—is there any room for my China."

The old man simply smiled and watched the sky for cranes.

For another year she lived in her native country, doing what she could, when she could, careful to keep her sorceries hidden from the frightened "peasants" she helped. From time to time she had help from other Marauders and the Akashic Brothers (occasionally working together without realizing it). Miss Zhao's Mentor had not informed his colleagues of her decision. In fact, after he was certain her insanity was "stable," he re-introduced himself and continued teaching her.

Life ran smoothly enough until Haixia unearthed a "palace intrigue" to allow barbarians to settle widely in her home province (the People's government attempting to stimulate the economy by foreign capitalist investment: the Syndicate moving in). She left for America to stop it,

failed, was captured, interrogated (a confusing process for all concerned) and turned over to the Progenitors for study. The Chantry to which she was taken, of course, was Barrister Martin's own prison.

Though kept under heavy sedation, monitored, prodded, poked and eventually stored in a cylindrical glass tank to await vivisection, Haixia's mind was not quite inactive—and one may assume that her Avatar and Martin's were quite busy. In her sluggish dreams, she became aware of a not-unfriendly presence nearby. One sleepy tendril of her mind reached out, and she found herself in extremely odd surroundings.

She was standing at a high table, dressed bizarrely and in painful shoes. Before her loomed an even taller desk and platform combination, surmounted by a scowling figure draped in black and wigged in powdery white. She turned slightly and saw beside her, in even stranger clothes, a gaunt and solemn man with the eyes of a hawk. Miss Zhao, as this new ally called her, never knew they were escaping until the deed was done.

Nowadays Miss Zhao stays with Martins for love and their mutual safety. She realizes he cannot function normally while his soul is in service to the Heavenly Courts.

Quiet: Base of 3. Haixia has found her China in madness, but the Middle Kingdom is such a large, fantastic and orderly place that few real-world elements cannot be translated clearly into her terms (i.e. abaci rather than calculators), and those that cannot are easily explained as enchantments or classed with the many oddities of Chinese mythology and legend. She remembers her pre-Quiet life as though it were a vivid dream.

Image: Miss Zhao appears to be in her mid-twenties, which is true, and very frail and delicate, which is not. She is stunningly beautiful and (when in the correct clothes) looks to have just walked off a master painter's screen. Ordinarily, however, her wardrobe is less appropriate to her grace: in her Quiet, blue jeans and T-shirts appear as peasant garb, and in her professional capacity as sorceress she prefers to blend in.

Roleplaying Notes: Protection of the Middle Kingdom is your goal, and its traditions are your only creed. You know exactly what you are doing, and what your place is in the grand scheme. Act like it without arrogance. You are also of the people, and no problem of theirs is too small for your concern and aid.

When you encounter other Awakened creatures, even vampires, treat them with the respect they deserve and in the manner they understand, even if it becomes necessary to kill them. Demons, of course (Nephandi, Fomori, *barabbi*), need not receive this consideration.



Medea

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Fanatic

Essence: Primordial

Tradition: ex-Verbena

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Expression 3, Intuition 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4, Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Leadership 4, Meditation 3, Melee 5 (Sickle), Stealth 3, Survival 5, Technology 1, Cosmology 9, Culture 1, Enigmas 5, Law 1, Linguistics 7 (Greek is her usual tongue), Medicine 3, Occult 4, Science 1

Backgrounds: Allies 5+ (a Black Fury pack, among others), Arcane 3, Avatar 4, Destiny 5, Dream 2, Library 3, Talismans 4

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 4, Forces 5, Life 6, Mind 5, Matter 5, Prime 5, Spirit 5, Time 4

Willpower: 10

Arete: 10

Quintessence: 13

Background: This is, in fact, the actual, honest-to-Goddess, mythological and murderous Medea, daughter of the King of Colchis, wife of Jason the Argonaut. After the historic

events of her association with that notable (during which, you may recall, she killed her younger brother, Jason's father, Jason's new bride-to-be, her own children and miscellaneous minor characters before being exiled), she went on to disappear completely. Legend has it that she never actually died, but went instead directly to the Elysian fields.

Legend has it almost right: Medea, frustrated by Jason's (politically necessary) betrayal, the hardships of exile and her own despair, sought solace among the inhuman spirits of the Umbra. For two millennia she roamed the Umbra, and did not return to Greece until 1346. What she found on her arrival shocked and puzzled her, and for fifty years she watched quietly from the Umbra. The Gauntlet was higher, surely...and the dryads scarcer and the satyrs reclusive. *Where were the gods?!*

Eventually she found them, in new guise, and spoke with an emissary of one, she knew not which. The Christian name meant nothing to her, and the Olympian name was never given. From that conversation came confusion and despair: surely nothing could withstand the days to come. But the choice was laid before her to become Marauder and Free, forever, of the net the Technocracy was weaving even then. She walked in what remained of the groves she remembered. She watched the cathedrals rise from the ruins of the temples, and in the spring she made her decision.

Medea is the only known active Marauder Oracle, and as such is much sought-after: the Technocracy want to kill her, the Nephandi want her even dead, the Bai Dai want to convert her, and the Umbral Underground practically worship her. The Traditions haven't quite made up their mind yet. On the one hand, she is a Marauder, but on the other hand, what she doesn't know about the Umbra isn't worth finding out. Besides which, coming to a direct decision would mean having to *do* something about it, and no one wants to take on Medea and the twelve-member Black Fury werewolf pack that follows her.

Moreover, the Dreamspeakers and Verbena are known to revere her, just a little bit, as a kind of living relic. It is possible that Medea takes on non-Marauder students from time to time, and this would certainly explain their interest.

Medea spends most of her little time on Earth clearing foul things from Europe's Umbra, attacking Nephandi nests and retrieving stolen or lost Talismans for the Garou, Dreamspeakers and Verbena (she may have any kind of gadget with her at any particular time). At need she can be reached, it is said, by any of five methods, of which friendly (preferably female) contact with Greek Black Fury Septs is the most reliable, if slowest.

Quiet: Base of 2. Medea believes that the world is as it was in Heroic Times and is usually mentally in Ancient Greece. She is not aware of the passage of time year-by-year, although moment-to-moment she has no problems. Hers is a remarkably adaptable madness, possibly because of the advance warning her Avatar received. Most differences

between her reality and the World of Darkness are purely cosmetic, and when it's *really* necessary to deal with something on a modern level, she understands it as a foreign magick. The Black Furies are only too happy to explain things in terms she can cope with, if not comprehend.

Image: It took some time for Medea to adapt to modern fashions, but after considerable effort on the part of the Furies, she adopted a more practical style of dress: a loose, white shirt with a jewel neckline that at least *drapes* like the clothes she was used to and black, baggy pants with pockets all over them. She has long, black, wavy hair that escapes its braids and falls into her face at the least provocation, blue-black eyes that reflect starlight in pinpoints *all the time*, and fair skin that flushes easily, particularly in combat.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a renegade priestess in a man's world, protecting the Mother from a danger the males haven't recognized yet. You are the fevered egalitarian who was caught in Athens' "citizen" society. You are the mother whose babes were worthless and deprived of their birthright merely because they were *yours*. You shouldn't have killed them, shouldn't have killed your brother, or that chit of a girl Jason was to marry—and some nights their screams haunt you. These children who come to you for answers...have they found the traps their own lands carry? Do they know the dangers? You want to make them listen...and to see...the dying time is coming, and so far only the Furies and the madmen know it for what it is.

Stephen of Warwick

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Architect

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: ex-Verbena

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 1(4), Brawl 0(4), Dodge 1(3), Expression 4, Streetwise 1(3), Subterfuge 2(4), Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Melee 2(4), Research 5, Stealth 0(4), Survival 0(5), Technology 2, Computer 2, Cosmology 1(3), Culture 3, Enigmas 4, Investigation 2, Law 1, Linguistics 6, Lore (all Lores at 1), Medicine 1, Occult 1(4), Science 1

Backgrounds: Arcane 4, Allies 4 (the BSR, a few mundanes who know nothing of his other life, and a British Fianna werewolf sept who keep an eye on him in between holidays), Avatar 5, Destiny 3, Library 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 2, Forces 4, Life 5, Matter 4, Mind 3, Prime 4, Spirit 5, Time 2

Willpower: 7(9)

Arete: 6

Quintessence: 5

Background: Though now known as the mild-mannered and respectable Professor Stephen Frewin Warwick, this is the famous hunter (most notably of the Dun Cow of Warwick) and lore-master of the tenth century. After joining the Verbena in his thirties, he took to exploring the Umbra rather than the forests, and eventually passed out into other lands.

Unlike Medea, Stephen spent most of his time exploring one Realm: Arcadia. After seven years there, he returned to Earth, to find, not surprisingly, that more than a century had passed. It was not a good time for his people. The Normans had only recently invaded, the old society was in ruins, and the Christians were staking their claims to all the best psychic real estate. The Verbena were doing what they could, but to Stephen's agile mind, the answer was clear: in another hundred years even his language would be gone, and the monks with their quill pens would change history *backwards* to erase what was left of his people.

He returned to the Umbra with a plan: while reality would allow it, he would save as much as he could. The Arcadian Fey had their own troubles and the attention span of a hyperactive mayfly, but for a few weeks he had their help, and many rare and unusual creatures found their way to the Horizon Realms during this period.

Then Stephen went home and joined the monks. In order that someone should remember that his way of life ever existed, he had to give it up entirely...almost.



For six hundred years Stephen of Warwick has passed from one place of learning to another. He blends in perfectly with the perennial middle-aged scribes that have bent over their work in palace, abbey, college and university since written memory began. For 357 days a year he is a mild-mannered, rationalist college don with no belief whatsoever in the myths he researches. Only between sundown before and sunrise after the eight major feast days of his religion can he remember who he truly is. On these days Stephen of Warwick takes care of Professor Warwick's problems, moving him from college to college to hide his longevity, disposing of curious Awakened in the area, maintaining ties with Garou and friendly Marauders, and whatever else the occasion demands.

Recently the situation has grown more complex, and probably more dangerous, as far as any outsider can tell. This is the first time that Stephen has set up the Professor with anything even resembling his real name, and no one has yet discovered why. Secondly, Stephen's ties to the local Garou are stronger than ever before: he is mated to a young Philodox of the sept. Finally, Johnny Gore has just innocently monkey-wrenched the whole works. There's no telling how stable a split-personality Quiet is. The Professor should, in theory, forget entirely about the wereraven's visit...but it could also present enough danger that the hunter's personality will surface. If it doesn't, and the Bai Dai get there before Johnny's pack, the local Garou, the BSR or (here's a novel idea) your troupe, there could be hell to pay.

Quiet: Base of 1. There is usually no difficulty in either Warwick's relation to the World of Darkness. The entire problem is that the Professor is worse than ignorant concerning magick. The gestalt is (but for the vigilance of the Fianna sept) completely defenseless 357 days a year. Curiously, though, the current vampire prince of the nearest city has declared a moratorium on interference with debunkers of any kind, so Warwick is safe from that direction for a while.

Image: Professor Warwick wears the traditional university don's garb: besides academic attire, his wardrobe consists of slightly shabby tweeds and chalkdust-impregnated Oxford shirts. He has only the ties of the school to which he is currently attached, always done up in a lopsided Windsor knot. His hair is silver-gray, worn long whenever society allows it (now, for instance), and his eyes are a non-committal hazel, but the face that surrounds them is kind and concerned about the least little thing. Not a few students have found help (of more kinds than they expected or the Professor knew) in his office.

Roleplaying Notes: As the Professor, do your favorite dignified teacher. Remember that there is no such thing as magick, but respect that in every age there will be those superstitious enough to believe...after all, if there weren't, you'd just be studying Shakespeare, wouldn't you?

As the hunter, Stephen of Warwick, be fierce before a threat and gentle in the face of weakness. Protect the helpless and the hopeless, defend your secrets, and revel in the night and the hunt when you can...but always be home before sunrise.



Critters



It is paramount to recall that at the time, the most learned of scholars would have laughed as heartily when told the phoenix was a myth, as we would today if the same news were reported of the elephant.

—Professor Stephen F. Warwick, *The Bestiary of the Forgotten*

The following are all Marauder-associated creatures. Some kick butt, while others are useful in more insidious circumstances. Be warned: even *one* of these beasts is an extremely unpredictable addition to your chronicle. For this book, we have included only upscale creatures: whatever their actual usefulness or combat-effectiveness may be, they are all capable of getting to where they need to be on their own, mostly. The ability to do this is the most tricky thing about them—if an opposing Marauder can literally pull a griffin out of his hat, your characters are in trouble. Use sparingly, and see how your world and your game-balance react before piling on too many.

Still, if the Marauders will be a major feature in your chronicle, you may want to hunt down (metaphorically speaking) even more critters to harass your PC's. Well, you're in luck: many already-published **Werewolf** supplements are stocked with useful bogeys, complete with statistics and attack patterns. For Storytellers for whom nothing less than their own creatures will do, we suggest as inspiration **The Book of Beasts**, T.H. White's translation of a 12th-century bestiary.

The Beasts

After all, creatures use the air and the sea. I mean, if there's a resource around, something's going to use it, aren't they? Then it wouldn't matter about bad digestion and wing size and so on, because the magic would take care of it. Wow!

—Terry Pratchett, *Guards, Guards*

The following (and most of the real weirdies in the Umbra, whether Marauder-allied or not) are also *thaumivores*, (literally, magic-eaters). In fact, what they consume is Quintessence, usually as Tass.

While this latent magick granted some of them quite remarkable powers, up to and including fire breath, telepathy, petrification, spirit travel, and curative abilities, most thaumivores are now extinct on Earth; there just isn't enough Tass to go around (ask any five Adepts). Many thaumivores have died out altogether and exist only as spirit creatures in Gaia's memories. These can be called up by Marauders, but will not cross the Gauntlet unless a body is prepared for them.

The rest of the magick creatures were smuggled off-planet by concerned mages (mostly Dreamspeakers), changing kin (mostly the Gurahl, or werebears), Marauders (a custom begun by Stephen of Warwick), the Fey and various servants of the Wym. . .for what horrible purposes this writer refuses to speculate—or they got off by themselves, into the Umbra, and from there to other Realms by their own means. These last are the kind described below.



• AS •

Abominable Snowman

(Properly known as the Upland Yeti, but abominable is such a cool word.)

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 1, Brawl 2, Intimidation 4, Stealth 2, Survival 5

Damage: 8 die claw, difficulty 6; 5 die bite, difficulty 8; 6 die grapple, difficulty 7

Tass Ration: One measure of Tass per hour on Earth proper. It can scavenge its own off-planet (about one per month).

The Upland Yeti, unlike its badass cousin the Lowland Yeti, is a placid, omnivorous creature. A big sucker with nearly no neck, the Abominable Snowman (lovingly nicknamed "Bommies" by their masters) acts rather like a Garou-sized sloth. Its coal-black eyes are nearly hidden in the mass of pure white, shaggy fur, giving it a sleepy look. However, the effect is completely spoiled by the Bommie's two-inch fangs and piton-like claws.

On Earth, the Yeti lived above the snowline as much as possible, preferring thin atmosphere, a good view and lichen to the predator-filled environment below. Until the species became thaumovoric, however, it continued to fall prey to Lowland Yeti and high-flying rocs. The high level of Tass available in its native range eventually allowed it to spend its time in the safer regions, and the difficulty of obtaining it in later centuries weeded out the less intelligent of the breed. Today's Yeti, living on Umbral Realms and Chimerae, is just slightly smarter than a genius orang-outan.

When attacked, Yetis are inclined to flee (occasionally carrying their protesting masters with them). On flat ground they are at a disadvantage, making perhaps twenty miles an hour in a short sprint. On uneven surfaces such as mountains, forested land, jungle gyms, or the typical city block, they do thirty at top speed—good enough to outdistance anything tracking from the ground in midtown traffic or heavy underbrush. The difference is due to the creatures' incredible upper body strength.

If forced to fight, those same powerful arms can pack an amazing wallop: Strength+2 when the claws are included. The Yeti's favorite tactics are the bear hug, the roundhouse claw rake, and the twist-your-enemy's-head-off maneuver. In addition, the creatures weigh a quarter-ton, and the unwary mage caught beneath one as it falls will surely regret it.

Bommies are not called up for fighting purposes if the Marauder is at all responsible: they are much more effective as pack animals, stevedores or companions. Many off-world Marauders find the Yeti the perfect sidekick on their treks in the Near Umbra or Horizon realms, as the creatures are (when not attacked) both gentle and willing to help.





Chi-rin

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Advantages: Aura Reading (detects a being's true nature; Perception+Awareness, difficulty 7), Step Sideways, Flight (15 yards/turn)

Damage: 4 die gore, difficulty 6; 5 die kick, difficulty 7; 3 die bite, difficulty 6

Tass Ration: Two measures per month in the Realms (this is in addition to its own scavenging), unless the environment is very high-magick.

The Chi-rin is one of the few creatures of Order not sullied by the Weaver's madness. Originally half-Umbral creatures, they were much sought after by Chinese emperors: the appearance of a chi-rin was a signal from heaven that the emperor's rule was just and blessed. The last emperor has been dead for decades, and the chi-rin left the world long before him.

They are not an intelligent species, but bright for herbivores. The chi-rin are also gorgeous—sometimes it seems the jewels of Gaia were banished from her to dull her dreams. The chi-rin are spotted like a leopard or giraffe, and the color of their coat varies from a pale gold with reddish-brown spots to a deep russet with blue-black spots—occasionally all on the same animal: a deep-hued mane and head that lighten to nearly white, yellow-spotted legs. A giraffe was once mistaken for a chi-rin.

In the Umbra, this animal is often mistaken for the diminutive variety of western unicorn, as it has a single horn, but this is stubbier and more curved than that of *unicornis minor*. Adult males are roughly the size of a goat, and the dams are slightly smaller.

The surviving chi-rin work now with Marauders and will flee from the unjust or Wyrn-tainted. They are therefore highly valued in the Umbral Underground: if a chi-rin accepts a newcomer, they can be absolutely trusted by the Chantry. Unfortunately, they cannot be taken to the now-festering Earth. Aside from the Quintessential problems of the situation, the manifestations of corruption would sicken and kill the creatures in minutes. There are stories of chi-rin rescuing Marauders from Nephandi or Technocrats by crossing the Gauntlet and dragging the Marauder back with them, but there are just as many of chi-rin dying in the attempt, and none of the tales have been confirmed.

They either hide very well, travel with wandering Undergrounders, or live in Marauder strongholds (which tend to be green and fresh, or at least natural and pure as they can remember them—passing deserts are always welcome). If a small Traditional cabal is free of corruption, they may chance to meet a chi-rin. Marauders they meet (of the aware variety) will respect the animal's opinions implicitly, but be cautious none the less.



Ukrainian Firebird

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Wits 3

Advantages: Flight (20 yards/turn), Fire (self only: 3 Health Levels/turn on physical contact)

Tass Rating: For a flaming bird, about 5 per month in the Realms or 5 per hour in Static Reality. When the firebird runs out, it ceases flaming and will die within a day if trapped on Earth.

Though the most famous of the blazing tree and waterfowl is the legendary Egyptian phoenix, Marauder terrorists find the Ukrainian variety far superior for their purposes. Less flighty, so to speak, than its Mediterranean cousin, the firebird is a real trouper under combat conditions.

In appearance, this creature closely resembles the traditional lacquer-paintings of its homeland: it is flame-colored, low-bodied and long-necked. The plumage on its wings is spectacular, as the primary feathers are unusually large, deeper in hue than the body and taper to a narrow point slightly beyond the secondaries. The jagged "frill" which covers the neck in folk-depictions is actually a representation of the flames that envelop the bird; they are most visible at this slenderest part of the physiognomy.

While the firebird is too weak for direct attacks (as opposed to rocs, for instance), the extreme temperature of its plumage makes it a useful ally. They are frequently brought through the Gauntlet in inconvenient places like chemistry labs and drug warehouses.

The fires of the phoenix, the flaming quetzal-tototl, the basilisk and the Ukrainian firebird have one thing in common: they cannot be extinguished by normal means. Because the creatures burn Tass and no earthly substance, water and oxygen depletion have no effect. Magick does work, but at least Forces 4 or Prime 3 (controlling the fire directly or diverting the Tass) must be employed to "put out" the bird itself. Less skilled mages will have to make do with hoses and buckets on the other materials the firebird ignites.

Griffin

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1 (unless you really like eagles), Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 4 (aerobatics), Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Expression 2, Intuition 3, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 2, Etiquette 4, Stealth 3, Cosmology 3, Culture 4 (patchwork kin), Enigmas 3, Law 3 (not human), Linguistics 2 (or more), Medicine 4 (mostly veterinary), Occult 3

Advantages: Flight (10 yards/turn), Step Sideways

Willpower: 7

Damage: 7 die claw or bite, difficulty 7

Tass Ration: One per month in the Umbra or Realms, two per week on Earth—which it is quite capable of stealing on its own. However, as they are intelligent beasts, they are too wise to remain on their danger-laden homeworld for that long.

A well-known figure of classical legend and heraldry, the griffin was one of the last thaumivores to disappear from Europe. Lewis Carroll is said to have conversed with the last one before it departed England, and there is nothing in *Alice in Wonderland* to contradict that. His characterization of the Griffin is fairly accurate, and he would appear to have described or introduced it to Tenniel, as well.

The griffin has the front parts (head, talons for forelegs, shoulders, wings) of a golden eagle, but rear end (from shoulder blades back) of an African lion. Its temperament is puzzling: if you pique its curiosity, you're safe as houses, and it may instruct you in the order of the universe. If you seem stupid to the beast, you may be ignored, or you may be dinner. Controlling magicks are not advised. Griffins have a long memory and no patience for fools.

Marauders who treat them well and with intelligence find them willing shock-troops, and they are particularly effective against Men-in-Black...the MIB's famous, interconnected memories seem to short out on encountering griffins (possibly through Paradox overload), and they have yet to find and adapt a suitable strategy against the creatures. Many a MIB has died from shock as the griffin came at it with two sets of talons, two sets of claws, and a beak, all from the air, all at once. Mere guns don't cut it.

Sphinx

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 4 (poetry), Intuition 5, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 4 (finance), Subterfuge 5 (riddles), Etiquette 3, Research 4 (history), Stealth 4 (hacking), Survival 4 (scrubland), Technology 2, Computer 4, Cosmology 3, Enigmas 5 (riddles), Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 4, Science 1

Advantages: Shapeshift (to a human mage), Holistic Immersion (allows her to manifest *outside* the Net. Requires no computer)

Spheres: Forces 3, Mind 3, Prime 3

Arete: 6

Willpower: 8

Damage: 5 die claws, difficulty 6; 4 die bite, difficulty 8

Tass Ration: Unnecessary in the Web. If the Sphinx is not a spirit beast, and can come to Earth, she would require Quintessence only while in her natural form or "centaur" state (2 per day for either). As a humanoid, she fits nicely into static reality as an Orphan mage, taking Paradox as per normal. However, the longer she stayed on Earth, the more "true" that identity would become.



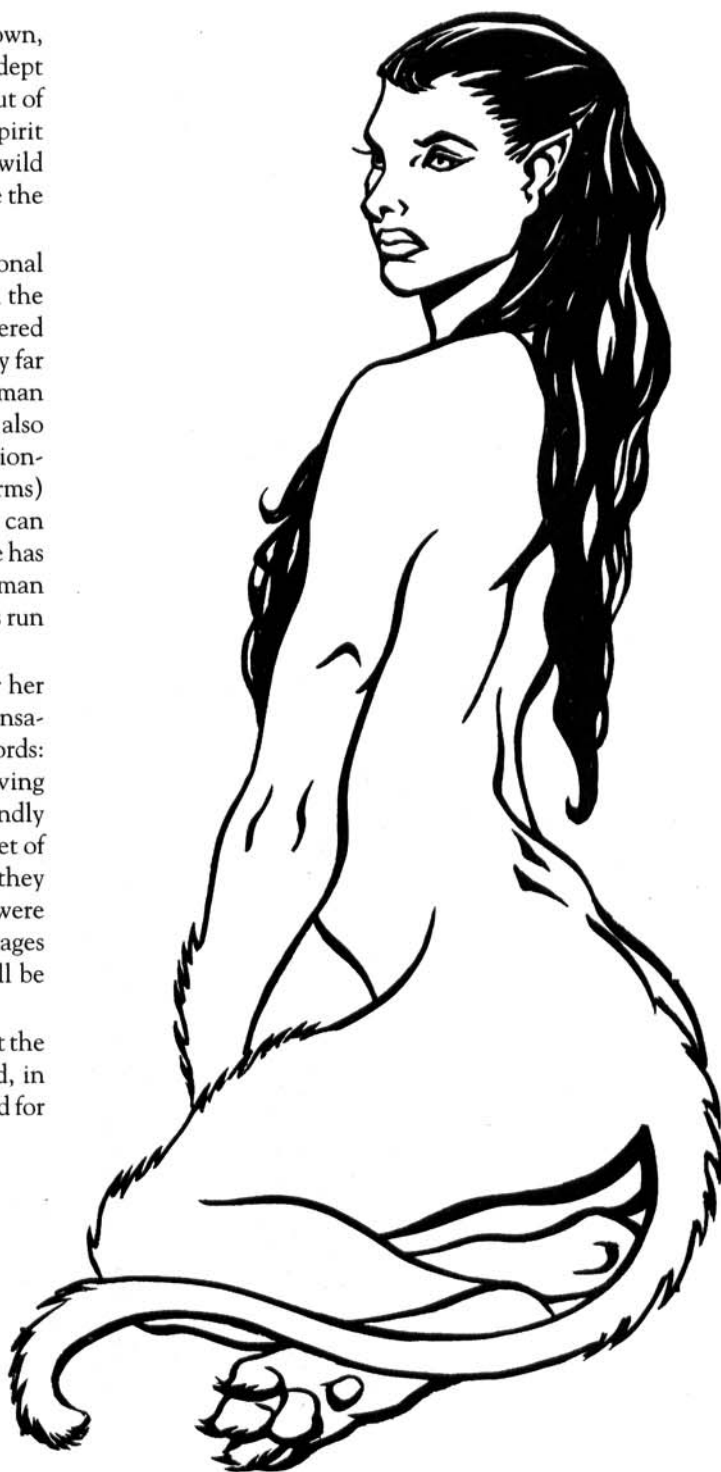
There is, in fact, one sphinx still living on Earth (more or less)—a riddling, man-eating, patchwork beastie sitting like a land mine in a little-used sector of the Digital Web. Thus far, her remarkable abilities have kept her clear of wandering Technocrats (or at least no Technocrat has ever reported seeing her) and the other denizens of the Net know her primarily by the pattern of the “corridors” she inhabits: dusty, tomb-like passages, deserted palaces, pyramidal labyrinths and decrepit libraries full of cobwebby scrolls. There are many windows looking out onto strange, brush-covered cliffs, but no doors to the outside.

Exactly how she came to be on the Net is unknown, although “Exile” Hess, the infamous ex-Virtual Adept (now a Marauder, he believes he is a demon thrown out of Hell for being too nice), claims she was a guardian spirit bound to Mount Qaf by the Ahl-i-Batin. If so, the wild country outside the walls of her musty Lair may well be the last vestige of the mountain itself.

The Net-sphinx looks vaguely like the traditional Greek representations of *female* sphinxes, rather than the male Egyptian ones. She has long, curly, dark hair gathered back in a traditional Greek style, and the roots go fairly far down the back since this is also her mane. She has a human face, neck, and frontal etcetera, but a lion’s body. She also seems to be capable of shapeshifting to a kind of lion-centaur state with six limbs (four legs, two human arms) and, in this form, is human to the waist. Whether she can appear human or not is still an open question, but Exile has been seen recently with a Mediterranean-looking woman whom he introduces as “Dido Ceuthonymus.” Rumors run wild.

Net-wanderers brave (or stupid) enough to enter her home most frequently find only empty rooms and a sensation of being watched. In one Electrodyné Diva’s words: “...as though one were a toddler walking through the living room—not welcome, not unwelcome, but tolerated kindly and to be ejected immediately if one got within five feet of the good china.” Some report that, after believing they were lost, they found the library and *knew* that they were allowed to read...very carefully. Many beginning mages seek out the Sphinx’s Lair in hope that they, too, will be allowed to research there.

Occasionally they do not come back. It may be that the sphinx has a taste for human “flesh” (the living mind, in this case), over-zealous Marauder protectors or a hatred for book-thieves. Caution is advised.



Storyteller Hints

These odd mages are dynamism personified. They should be unpredictable, eccentric, mysterious and scary as hell. Running them as magickal kooks with silly names is a disservice to this mad group. Thus, a few suggestions:

- **Give your Marauders unique Quiets and motivations:** Chaos mages are individuals—more so than many of their counterparts among the other groups. Unhindered by structure or expectation, these wild cards multiply their individual quirks exponentially. Give your Marauders substance by thinking up motivations and delusions for each one. These backgrounds will give them personality and depth. No one, even a maniac, does anything without some kind of a reason.

- **Don't stay bound to die rolls:** This is good advice for Storyteller games in general, but it's especially applicable when running Marauders. The chaos mages are wild and unpredictable. Reducing their actions to a constant die roll would take away some of their mystique.

- **Remember the terror of unpredictability:** Have you ever faced down a madman or repressed a shudder when a loved one (family member, lover, roommate) suddenly went irrational, saying and doing things that made no sense? Have you ever frozen at the sound of a sudden crash or scream, wondering what caused it and whether you would become involved? This is the terror of irrationality, when the rug gets yanked out from under your stable little life, and you don't know where you're going to end up falling.

Marauders are this fear in spades. Keep this in mind.

- **Have fun:** Marauders are anything but sticks-in-the-mud. Most of them consider freeform reality-screwing to be more fun than a barrel of acid-tripping chimps. Imagine the Joker, in his best incarnations, with the power to warp reality—kind of funny in a really sick way.

Player Character Marauders

Given the unpredictable nature of Marauders, most Storytellers ought to feel apprehensive about allowing players to create their own. Given the predictable nature of power-gamers, most Storytellers should know how to handle the issue of Marauder PCs.

If you decide to let someone play a Marauder, remember that Quiet is a double-edged sword. The madness that insulates the mage from Paradox also makes it hard to cope with other forms of reality. This is, after all, the reason the Mad Ones haven't ruined reality as we know it: they simply can't communicate or cooperate well enough to accomplish much in the long run. There are no Marauder Chantries (or, if there are, they are damned rare) and no formal ranks, status or distinctions. Many Tradition mages and all Technomancers have kill-on-sight orders for Marauders; any cooperation will be short-lived.

Insanity is more than a neat game mechanic; it should cripple any player-Marauder at inopportune times or lead her off on wild unicorn chases. Her mannerisms may alienate her comrades. Her unpredictability should scare hell out of them. Be sure that players who take Marauder characters can roleplay out the good and bad sides of unrelenting change. Players who act too sane should be reminded what they have chosen. If they cannot handle such a character, they should make a new one.

Beginning Marauder PCs should start with a Quiet no higher than four. This will go up and down as the game progresses, with appropriate changes of delusion. Marauderism is a one-way street; once a mad mage, always a mad mage.

Common Marauder Traits

Because of their diversity, Marauders can have any Traits they want. Few have high Social Attributes or Perception, but others are quite strong in these areas. Common Abilities include high Alertness, Awareness, Dodge, Intimidation, Meditation, Cosmology, Enigmas and many types of Lore.



Chapter Four: Demons and Demon Cults

*From his brimstone bed, at break of day,
A-walking the Devil is gone,
To look at his little snug farm of a world,
And see how his stock went on.*
— Robert Southey, "The Devil's Walk"



Lucifer, the most proud and beautiful of the Angels, betrayed The One and was cast to the Infernal Pits. Thus Hell was created with a dark angel to rule over it. Those who joined Lucifer in his rebellion became the Fallen Ones. They begat the demons who would plague humans until the end of time. Forever linked to humankind, they ease their own pain of betrayal to the One by doing Lucifer's work; they gather evil souls for their just punishments. These souls fill the Inferno with their undying screams of unearthly torment for all eternity.

Demons do not wait for lost souls; they work to bring more into Hell through promises of Great Rewards. Those who are easily corrupted fall prey to the demons. A demon's power in the Inferno is measured in the number of souls it can envelop with darkness.

We must stand against them as the servants of The One. We are not worthy, but ours is the only Tradition that will claim this bloody task. Guard the Sleepers well, for they are vulnerable, easily seduced by secrets, power and pleasures. Exorcise the demons who possess them and destroy those with forms of their own. Watch out for mages who have been corrupted by the Infernal Powers, for they are most dangerous. They are more vile and cunning than the Nephandi, for they pose a far greater threat. They not only endanger the physical aspects of their victims, but their spiritual aspects as well.

— Bishop Montgomery of the Celestial Chorus

Views on the Nature of Infernal Beings



Whence and what art thou, execrable shape?

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

"Demon" is a common label, but what are they, exactly? The answer is not easy to pin down. There are, in common parlance, three different types of beings usually referred to as demons:

- True demons, also called devils, satans, daemons, tempters and many other names, which are spirits from the High Umbral Hells and Inferno Realms. These beings are thought to be manifestations of human evils and concepts.

- The so-called demon hordes who wait beyond the Horizon. This term has been used (amid much confusion) to refer both to true astral demons and the Outside Things That Must Not Be. While the nature of these creatures is unclear, they seem to be material beings from far-off realities who want this one to themselves.

- False demons or beings believed to be true demons. Banes, powerful black magicians and vengeful wraiths are often mistaken for demons and sometimes create their own hell-Realms for rest and relaxation.

Many mages reject these divisions; still others do not bother to make distinctions at all. There are a great many views about demons and their kind. Each mage faction has their own pet theories. One constant remains: demons are intelligent, powerful and utterly corrupt.

Creatures of the Mind

"The beings referred to commonly as demons are creatures of the mind created as aspects of our own desire for balance given physical form. They embody not some alien evil, but the evil capacities of humanity. They give meaning to the light within ourselves through their darkness. As humans are imperfect, they cannot become as evil as demons. Therefore, demons serve as receptacles of blackest perfection for our needs. Thus they serve humanity.

"Yet humanity has also served the demons greatly, for humanity has given them breath. Just as Paradox can take sentient form, so too have the Sleepers given birth to freewilled, sentient demons throughout the centuries. Some of these demons die with the cultures which created them. Other wise ones pass on the myths of themselves to other cultures, sustaining their existence for eternity.

"Worse yet, humanity has blessed these dark beings with great powers to aid in their work. These powers allow demons to sustain themselves without need for perpetual belief simply by stealing the souls of believers. It may be that these souls possess enough power and sentience to sustain demons eternally. Demons are great corrupters, for they seek eternal existence just as humans do so.

"Many claim the demons of humanity gather in a place somewhere on outside this earthly existence in a place they call Hell. This Realm of their own serves as a holding place for captured souls and as a place where demons can plot with and against one another to gain more power."

— Ho Chu, Akashic Brother

Primordial Force of Balance

"Demons represent the eternal forces of nature which provide balance to the Tellurian, offsetting good with evil just as day is offset by night. Before the humans, there were no demons as we know them now. Demons were Banes, dark spirits of nature. When humanity became sentient some Banes gained sentience as well in order to provide balance. Some claim spirits of the Weaver and the Wyld also gained sentience, and that mages are embodiments of any or all of the three of the forces of nature.

"Demons are a higher order of spirits than the Banes and other creatures of the Wyrms, but they serve a similar purpose: they exist to corrupt. Demons grow in power to match the power of those they oversee, thus providing balance. As humanity grows, so does the power of the demons. Now there are many sentient demons who act of their own free will in serving the forces of corruption.

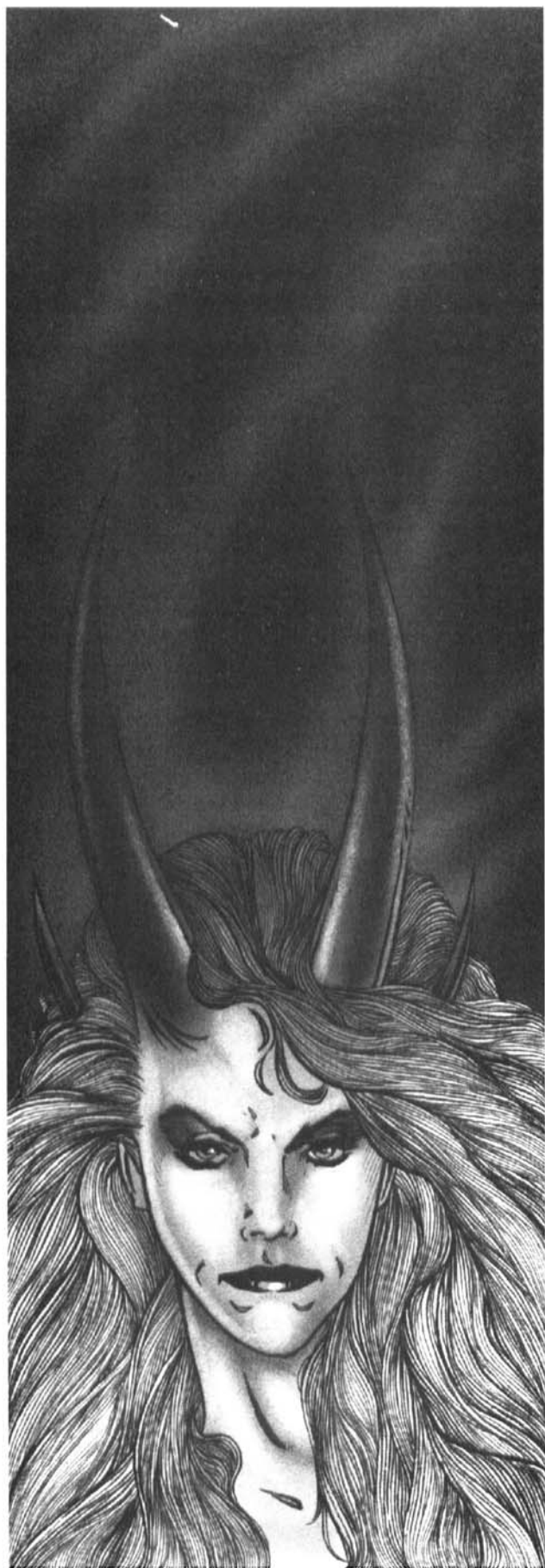
"As spirits, they must feed themselves to sustain their power. Because they were created as a force of balance for humanity, they must consume human souls. Demons use their incredible mental faculties to trick humans into freely giving away their souls in exchange for power. Little do they know it, but the demons merely provide their prey with a small portion of the power from their own souls and keep the rest of the soul for themselves. Because souls cannot be destroyed permanently, demons torment them for eternity, consuming them again and again.

"Demons are incredibly dangerous, far more dangerous than any other force of the Wyrms, for they have turned their backs upon the Wyrms to establish their own unified force of destruction. No Bane, not even an Urge Wyrms, has done so. Demons, having superhuman intelligence, know they can accomplish far more by acting in a unified manner. Together, the demons gather in a Dark Realm in the Umbra many Sleepers call Hell. By maintaining a hierarchy of leadership and by establishing and following rules, they accomplish far more than the Triatic Wyrms themselves at least in terms of corrupting human souls."

— Mae Roberts, Dreamspeaker

Powers from the Underworld

"Demons are beings created by the forces of darkness, the same forces which created (and now threatens) the Underworld. Demons were once restless souls of the dead who sought great power to escape the pain of their non-living existence. By proving themselves ultimately corrupt in mind, the darkest forces deep within the Death Realm warped their bodies to match their minds.



"With the physical mutations came great power, even greater madness and an eternal duty to claim ownership of as many souls for the Great Darkness as possible. The demons barter for the souls of the living. Those who agree to their terms under ancient laws of soul ownership are then marked. None may take their souls upon death without facing retribution at the hands of the demonic hordes deep within the Darkness. Worse yet, even upon death, a soul is still fair game to demons, for demons can capture souls or buy them. Some ghosts even seek out demons so they too can become demons to share their eternal pain of restless death with others. Their demonic powers of possession, manifestation and claiming souls are all powers some wraiths possess, but merely applied to the service of the Great Darkness.

"The demons gather in a domain at the edges of the Oblivion in a place they call Hades. There, they torture their soul thralls and feast upon the weakest of them. They scheme and plot amongst themselves, but are led by a force greater than themselves, a Great Darkness."

— Voormas, Euthanatos

Out of Space, Out of Time

"Demons are members of a powerful extra-dimensional race of unexplained origin which must sustain itself on human souls for continued existence. The demons have been around for millennia, though some believe they were freed upon the Earth and its spirit realms by the Nephandi of ancient Babylon.

"Souls provide demons with power. However, demons seldom use direct force in claiming souls. They prefer to corrupt them first. Perhaps they abide by ancient practices imposed upon them by exterior forces allowing them to only consume souls given freely, or maybe they can only consume those souls which are properly corrupted.

"The demons seem to care little about the world of humanity beyond the extent of their own sustenance. While they do use their powers in limited ways to corrupt humanity as a whole, they seem to focus in corrupting a select few at a time. It may be they care little about actual corruption and seek only sustenance. Thus, their cults are designed to provide them with future meals. The power they give their minions to use on earth serves merely to corrupt them properly for consumption.

"According to all known magickal tomes in the library of Doissetep, no one has actually seen what might possibly be the real Inferno. While many have been discovered in both the light and dark aspects of the Umbra, all have proven false reflections of the darker source from which demons originate. Perhaps demons do not exist at all within time and space of human conception. They may exist in a dimension or a place outside of time unto itself."

— Hariste, Hermetic mage



Of Common Ancestry

"There is a secret I must tell you: demons are our kin. You see, long ago we were born of the same source. I am talking about those of us who possess strong Avatars and the gift of magick, not all mortals. When our human ancestors began to walk upright and think there were those among them who possessed the gift of original thought. We were formed, and so were the demons.

"Our ancestors needed a way to explain the lightning which struck down upon them and why the Earth was enveloped with darkness only to be cast away by the light. They created gods and demons to embody the forces of nature. Gaia became the whole of the Earth and gained great power over all: To explain the harsh aspects of existence — disease, hunger, pain, fear— our ancestors created demons. So too did they create those who could ward them from the demons: the first mages. The primal shaping of the worlds of flesh, mind and spirit occurred over thousands and thousands of years. In that time, reality altered to fit the beliefs of the primitive people.

"Mages and demons are, therefore, opposing forces created from the same source. With the advent of language, the shaping of reality became much easier, and the demons and the mages went their separate ways. Both grew in power and form as the force behind them grew. Now the only tie which remains is the power to shape reality granted by their ancestors. The demons still cling to their original purposes, for consensual reality will not allow for anything else, but they do so now with intelligence and power granted them all through history, especially during the Middle Ages, which cannot be taken away. They have learned to hold onto it."

— Gail Holsombake, Verbena

The Demons Within

"Demons? You fool. We *are* demons. Look at our work and tell me it is not the greatest of evils."

— Victor Madra, Cult of Ecstasy *barabbi* and member of the Seventh Generation Medical Caste

Superstition

"Let me repeat. There are no such things as demons beyond the possibility of forces created by our magian adversaries for their own evil designs. These forces are merely misconstrued as 'demons' by Sleepers. The entire Sleeper belief system concerning demons is most likely the insidious work of the Celestial Chorus. It is likely they do not even realize this merely adds credence to the existence of the Nephandi and Marauders, thus freeing them and their minions in many ways from Paradox. This makes them even more dangerous."

— Oscar Hamilton, New World Order Administrator

The Unknown

"I have never encountered any beings which identified themselves as demons, though there are many unexplainable forces deep within the Void."

— Karen Brewster, Void Engineer

The Creatures of Darkness

*Some enchanted evening . . .
You may see a stranger
Across a crowded room.*

—Oscar Hammerstein II, "Some Enchanted Evening" from *South Pacific*.

Demons, regardless of their origins, are invariably evil. Their sole purpose is to create pain and gather power at human expense. Through their efforts, they accumulate souls. From human souls (other species' do not seem to interest them), they gain status among their own kind and even greater power on Earth and in their Nether-Realms.

They appear in many forms, most of which are benign, if not pleasing to the eye. Their form is always best suited for their task at hand, though many have "natural" forms which they usually assume when injured, angry or simply capricious. Many demons, such as succubi and incubi, seduce humans through carnal pleasures. Some demons use promises of power to draw in their foolish victims, while still others use sheer force to intimidate their victims into serving them. Regardless of the method used, the end result is always the same: the demons get the victims' souls, and the victims receive only a short-term reward which hardly makes up for their own loss.

Infernal creatures possess all sorts of powers: producing hellfire, inflicting pain, inducing pleasure, stealing secrets, reading minds, causing bad luck, rapid healing, summoning other demons, Umbral travel and wish-granting. Demons are extremely dangerous and powerful, but they seldom directly use their powers except when they wish to demonstrate the price of failure. Most are cowardly and will only face opponents far weaker than themselves. Hermetic scribes who rank the Umbrood grant lower demons "Minion" status, while the Infernal majority ranges from Preceptors to (thankfully few!) Lords.

All but the lowest of demons are subtle and Machiavellian. Most act like slick drug pushers: "C'mon, guy, I'm your friend. Have a favor, it's on me..." A demon will seemingly aid a character in the beginning, protecting him from harm, bringing great pleasures and rewards and asking little in return. Over time, the demon will begin asking for favors, but will promise rewards in exchange. Eventually, a character will have no qualms over selling his soul to the demon, since the demon has bargained fairly up until that point. Once under the demon's control, things change...

Demonic Possession

I'll swallow your soul! I'll swallow your soul!

—Henrietta (possessed), *Evil Dead II: Dead by Dawn*

Many demons possess the power to enter into and control the bodies and minds of mortal hosts. Even mages are not protected from demonic possession. In fact, many demons enjoy possessing mages; doing so allows them to wreak all sorts of havoc.

Possession requires the demon to have the Possession Charm (see Appendix); it rolls its Gnosis against the victim's Willpower to do the deed. If successful, the demon has two options: it can try to sneak into the host and subtly influence her, or it can try for an all-out takeover. Mortals who freely open themselves up to possession, such as through the use of Ouija Boards, reduce difficulty by 3.

Demons who attempt subtle possession must roll their Manipulation + Subterfuge using their host's Perception + Awareness as a difficulty. If the demon is successful, the host does not know she is being manipulated and will believe she is acting in a particular manner of her own free will. If the host succeeds, the demon's influence is spotted and the host may cast out the demon by making a Willpower roll (difficulty 6).

If the demon attempts an all-out takeover of the host, both make Willpower rolls (difficulty 6). If the demon achieves more successes, the host's consciousness becomes submerged. The greater the number of successes, the further it is submerged. The host may attempt to reemerge at any time by making another opposed Willpower roll. However, each attempt will cost the host 1 Willpower point (before making the roll).

Demons have full access to the memories of their host in addition to all their own faculties. They usually use their hosts to perform actions for either demonic benefit or for the sheer joy of destruction.

A mage may attempt to exorcise a possessing demon if she has a Spirit rating of 3 or greater by making an Arete roll, difficulty 8. If successful, she can make an opposed Willpower roll on behalf of the victim against the demon. The mage receives one automatic success for every success on her Arete roll.

Those with True Faith may also make an opposed Willpower roll on behalf of victims who are possessed. They automatically receive one success on their roll for every point of Faith they have. Botching either attempt can open the door for truly hellacious consequences.

Storyteller Hints: Demons

It's fairly easy to abuse or overuse demons in a magickal game. Frequent appearances by the Infernal Powers, however, does not really fit the tone of either Mage or the World of Darkness as a whole. Such entities are best left in the shadows, looming occasionally from the depths to add fearsome spice to a tale, then retreating before too much can be revealed. The greatest terrors are those dim shapes which we recognize but cannot ascertain. Familiarity breeds boredom. Demons should never become mundane.

Fighting a demon one-on-one is a foolish proposition. Nevertheless, players may wish (or be forced) to do it. Assume that none but the stupidest of demons will hang around for a serious fight—they have better things to do than scrap with mortals. While servitors (see below) may battle characters, most demons will merely taunt them, cause them some kind of anguish and leave.

These entities should be impressive. Herald their arrival by bad omens, worse weather, mysterious sounds, awful smells and bone-deep warnings of danger. These beings are forces of nature, not mere monsters. Play up the otherworldly aspects of the Infernal if a demon ever appears.

Demons do not, by the way, seek utter destruction for the world (unlike the demented Things Beyond the Horizon). They exist to cause misery, not to extinguish all life. Masters theorize that demons, being the personifications of evil and fear, would cease to exist if humanity were to be obliterated. There's only one way to test this theory, and no one wants to try it!

Rules

As entities of spirit, demons have two sets of statistics: their natural spirit forms (for use in the Umbra) and physical materialized stats (for when they manifest on Earth or a Realm). Humans cannot physically affect ephemera (the stuff of which spirits are made) unless they have some powerful tie to the spirit world. Demons are thus immune to physical attacks so long as they do not materialize. The Charm Appear allows a spirit to manifest without taking physical form, and many demons like to use it to bait mortals without risk. Rules and details about spirits and mortal interactions can be found in Chapter Five and the Appendix.

Even in physical form, demons heal at a startling rate. The Heal Charm allows a demon to regenerate its material body for one Health Level per Power point spent, or three points for an aggravated Health Level (see Appendix for Power and Charms). Most demons have plenty of Power. If a demon's Power or Health Levels are expended, its body is dispelled, and it returns to its astral hell.

Demonic magick is more a plot device than a set of statistics. Assume that the lower orders will have a few set powers (their Charms), while others can use any Effect their Spheres might indicate. The most powerful can do anything they damn well please with few limitations. These limits include:

- **The Barriers:** It is one of the blessings of the walls between worlds that demons and their ilk cannot simply pass into our world whenever they want to. Summonings, from simple invocations to complex rituals, are needed to bring an Infernal being across into our world. Once they are here, however, demons are notoriously hard to dispel. Further rituals or the destruction of the demon's material form are usually required.

- **Paradox:** While static demonic powers (Investments and Charms) are immune to Paradox, those who use dynamic True Magick run the same risks as anyone else twisting reality in such a fashion. Paradox backlashes against materialized demons can actually damage them (re. physical backlash). Thus, demons usually avoid Sphere magick in the material world.

- **Purity:** Purity offends demons; they take aggravated damage from attacks composed of pure Prime energy and suffer physical damage from True

Faith (one die of aggravated damage per dot of Faith). Demons lose much of their power on Holy Days and in places of positive religious sanctity. Granted Investments may not work, and infernalists or Diabolists may find themselves out in the cold on such days.

- **The will of the summoner or pact:** An exceedingly clever mortal may be able to wrangle a contract around to limit the demon's powers over her. This is very rare and dangerous. Nevertheless, if a demon is specifically prohibited from doing a certain thing, it is said that he cannot. This concept, however, may be a ruse to further fool mortals into trusting their own abilities to best a demon.

- **Deus ex Machina:** These are forces out there that, for whatever reason, do not want Infernal entities wandering the Earth. These powers may include divine will, static reality (see Unbelief, Chapter Two), mighty mages or even the laws of nature. Just as demons have great leeway with their magicks, they must also be bound to follow certain Things Which Simply Are. The perimeters of these limits is the Storyteller's discretion, but some boundaries should exist.

Ranks

The ranks below are mere guidelines, not Infernal or Hermetic hierarchies. The power level of demonic beings will vary considerably and are the Storyteller's place to decide. The abilities to cross the Barriers and grant Investments, however, corresponds to the following levels. Weaker demons can wander more easily into our world, but cannot give the powers and wisdom most infernalists desire. Infernalists often "jump levels" in a search for greater power, getting themselves further into debt with the loan sharks of the soul.

- **Servitors:** When the misnomer "demon hordes" is used, it often refers to these lesser Infernal creatures. As the name implies, servitors act as agents or muscle for their mightier kin. Few demons of this level have a set form or identity. They shift constantly, growing limbs or orifices, going from classical mythological devil-forms to amorphous blobs of mind-shattering protoplasm, depending on the expectations of their audience and the will of their masters. In their non-material forms, servitors and Middle-Umbral Banes act as the proverbial "evil spirits" that plague humanity.

Servitors cannot grant Investments or teach black magic beyond the second rank. They may, however, cross the Gauntlet and manifest with simple rituals and minor invocations.

- **Tempters:** Common infernalists deal with these demons most often. Tempters are those Infernal creatures that pass on Investments and black magic in exchange for one's soul. These demons are clever, subtle and arrogant. Each has an identity and a specialty: Nishama bides over the perversity of human intellect while Jadra guards the secrets mages crave.

Most of these beings rank as Preceptor Umbrood (see Chapter Five) for sheer power. They can grant Investments up to five points and can teach all but the most advanced black magicks. Only the most powerful can Awaken an Avatar to perform True Magick. These demons are great storehouse of occult lore, but must be dealt with utmost caution. Rituals of some power are necessary to invoke a tempter, though they may be contacted through Umbral and astral travel.

- **Lords:** Only the strongest infernalists can truck with these personifications of malice, and only the maddest would want to. Demon Lords rank as Umbrood Lords (or even higher) and can use mighty magicks with little difficulty. They are, however, living blights upon reality and cannot travel here without major sacrifices and summoning rites.

These beings are essentially gods and should be handled more as plot devices than as characters. Though they can grant any level of Investment, few would waste their time. No mortal could meet their price. A human life, even a supernaturally long one, is not worth their notice or effort.

AK

Diabolists and the Lure of Power



Although human life is priceless, we always act as if something had an even greater price than life...But what is that something?

Power corrupts. Demons know this, which is why they offer it to those whose souls they wish to own. Many humans, Sleepers and mages alike, are willing victims, weak in spirit and hungry for power. They have never seen their souls and believe they have little to lose in exchange for such a great "gift" of power. Even those who do believe in the soul merely look to the short term, blinded by their greed, or believe themselves so cunning they will be able to betray their demonic masters before they claim their souls. In every case, they are horribly mistaken.

Infernalist Mages

Mages throughout time have tried to bargain with Infernal beings, blinded by hubris and short-term gain. Modern Tradition sorcerers punish demonic transactions with long Ostracisms, Avatar Brandings and even Gilgul. The Nephandi, of course, are well known for their dealings with demons and otherworldly hordes. While some Orphans and Hollow Ones have been known to dabble in demonology, few attain the power to deal with demons of any kind of significance. The Technocracy, naturally, denies that demons exist, though they can attest to the "alien beings" that wait just out of sight, waiting for them to relax their guard. The Technocratic penalty for Infernal dealings is death.

Virtually all Traditions and Conventions have infernalists in their midst; not all who deal with darkness join the Nephandi. These secret traitors often begin by seeking greater knowledge or power, secure in their magick and ripe with pride. The Order of Hermes is said to be the greatest offender in this regard, but that may just be the stain of Faustus (the Order denies that the man ever lived, or, if he had, that he ever belonged to any of their Houses). The Technocracy openly dismisses the notion of soul-selling. Whether or not Convention mages ever deal directly with such powers remains unknown.

Despite the warnings, risks and punishments, mage and Sleeper alike continue to deal with Infernal powers. Though most mages have no "label" for such black magicians (other than a host of epithets), "infernalist" is a common appellation. Mortals who gain Infernal powers through demonic bargains are generally called Diabolists.



A vast majority of Diabolists were Sleepers before their Avatars were Awakened by their demon masters and learn the ways of magick through demonic instruction. Some go on to study True Magick, but most remain "content" with their Infernal Craft. Some Orphans do turn to the Dark Path without the Nephandi's help, but the ways of static magic are closed to them. Mages who sell their souls to demons can gain Demonic Investments (described later) and may even increase their ratings in the magickal Spheres. However, mages who do so are as cursed and tormented as any Diabolist. These tragic figures are powerful but truly damned.

Sleeper Diabolists

Ashes to ashes

Dust to dust

If God won't help me

Then the Devil must...

— Venom, "Raise the Dead"

When a mortal wishes to deal with a demon, she is often, but not always, the one to open such a bargain. In the case of unAwakened infernalists, this often begins with a sacrifice and non-magicked ritual. Once beseeched or summoned, a demon begins his corruption by providing the Sleeper with some minor power or favor without asking anything in return. The Sleeper is still a Sleeper even though she possesses powers, for the powers do not originate from within her, but from the demon (though some would dispute this). Winning greater favors from the tempter, however, requires a pact of some sort (see below).

After the pact is made and the Sleeper's soul is signed away, her Avatar is Awakened... somewhat. She can use a limited degree of magic at the cost of a soul. The demon takes that soul straight to Hell for immediate "attention." The soulless mortal becomes a pawn to her dark master, often corrupting others so the demon can steal their souls as well. The resulting pawn is not a true mage, but a Diabolist.

Diabolists have great Paradox-free powers, but such black magic is static, a form of Hedge Magic. Diabolists at this stage no longer get free powers from their demon masters; instead, their power comes from their own souls. The demon master, however, controls and shapes the Diabolist's power. These dark wizards even practice a form of ritual magic called *Ritualis Infernal*, pit craft or Dark Sorcery. Details about this evil magic can be found in this book's Appendix.

Unlike the mages they resemble, most Diabolists do not form "Traditions," or large groups. Instead, they join or begin cults, often dedicated to their demonic masters. These cults—called covens, circles, hexes, societies, orders, or any number of things—ape the mages of legend but have little, if anything, to do with true mages or their War. Though such groups often ally with Nephandi (wittingly or otherwise), Diabolists usually serve themselves and their masters.



Other Supernatural Beings

Rumor has it that some werewolves, vampires and faeries also deal with demonic powers. The Chorus claims that all vampires worship devils whether they know it or not. The Verbena disagree. Euthanatos voyagers state that the devils in afterlife hells are merely strong wraiths who style themselves demons. The truth behind these and other tales is confused at best, and the demons themselves would be the last ones to clear up any misconceptions. Their mystique and hidden allies only adds to their facade of power.

Tarnation of the Soul

Hell is full of good intentions or desires.

— Attributed to St. Bernard

Over the course of time, the dark seed which impregnates the heart of Diabolists grows and with it, their power and their understanding of what they have become. Initially, they are merely deceivers hiding their newfound powers of darkness from their friends and family. They attempt to maintain their old lives, but eventually lose their loved ones, either by angering them, betraying them or corrupting them.

These deceivers largely deceive themselves, for they do not think of the price they have paid for power. They revel in their service to their masters, believing they have total freedom but often form the lesser members of demon cults. They work with others spreading their corruption, accumulating power (mostly for the leaders of their cults) and worshipping their demon masters.

Those who prove most cunning and evil move up in the ranks within their cults the fastest, not because they are given higher positions, but because they take them from others. They realize the value of personal power. Rather than serving their cults, they trick their cults into serving them. Few ever even see the demon to whom they have sold their soul after the pact is sealed.

Eventually they gain enough power to take control of their cult or start a cult of their own. This cult serves their demon masters, but it also serves the Diabolist. By this time, the demon-dealer is totally corrupt and evil. She has stolen many souls away with promises of power, and in return she has received a portion of their power. The Diabolist becomes a monster in human form, capable of great magickal feats and even greater depravity.

Diabolists often learn the value of their mistakes before their own deaths, but there is little they can do about it. They become disillusioned, for power holds no meaning to them if they cannot even own their own souls...the most valuable power of all. These pawns are the wise puppets. They must continue serving their masters and powerful servants, but their heart is no longer in it. When they outlive their usefulness and their masters find younger, more cunning Diabolists to take their place, they will join their masters forever in the hells.

Many of the wise puppets struggle in vain to find a way out, to free themselves of their Infernal pact. It is not unheard for one to seek out mages, hoping they have the power to free him. However, even the most powerful mages seldom have the power to do so. While it might be possible to prolong the life of a Diabolist by protecting him from his master and its minions, death eventually comes. Since the soul is already taken, the demon merely awaits his pawn's death. The unfortunate will soon learn just how badly his soul has already been tortured...

The Demon Cults

He said likewise

That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,

That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.

— Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Grandmother*

Paul had been to the old mill before, but he had never been in it all alone. His older brother Billy and a couple of Billy's friends, including Nate, used to come there together after the high school football games to get drunk back before Billy disappeared a couple of months ago. The mill was said to be haunted by the spirits of Confederate soldiers who had died there during some nameless skirmish.

He had come there on a dare...and for a case of beer. Nate had dropped his wallet downstairs and needed to get it back. Paul had agreed to recover it. Nate had promised him he would stop by the store and pay him off on the way back. Being that Paul was underage, the bet was worth testing his mettle over. Nate seemed like an okay guy, even if he was too chicken to go in and get it himself. He had been a friend of Billy's, and that meant he was okay.

Paul got out of the car, turned on his flashlight and climbed over the rocks to the field by the stream where the mill sat. The night wind, or possibly fear, caused his teeth to chatter as he climbed the creaking mill steps and pushed open what remained of the door. The hinges squealed, but Paul stood firm. He peeked in a bit and shined his light all around, then entered the dusty, empty room.

He knew he had to get Nate's wallet if his buddy was going to pay him back, so he had to go into the basement. Paul's ice-cold, trembling left hand felt for the railing as he shined the light down the stairs. Slowly he crept, fearing the ghosts of the long dead soldiers, ready to bolt at any moment. Paul dropped his flashlight, startled as he heard the creaking of the door in the room above as the wind blew it back shut again.

Refusing to go back after coming so far, Paul walked down the rest of the stairs at an even pace; if he ran, he might fall through the old boards. The flashlight had landed inside the doorway of the room below, giving out just enough light for him to see his way down.

Paul picked up the light and swept it across the room hoping to see strewn beer cans and Nate's wallet, half-fearing he would see the Confederate dead. Instead he found much worse.

His heart skipped, and his breath seized up as he shined the light into the faces of men and women standing all about the sides of the room. Dressed in black hooded robes laced with red and gold symbols, they stared at him without emotion and began chanting in some strange tongue. Before him was an altar stained in blood. Upon the floor were arcane symbols, and upon the wall before him hung a hideous stuffed image of a goat-man built of painted human bones wrapped in furs. Where the human skull should have been, a ram's skull glared at him with glowing red eyes. A pale-skinned man stepped from the gathered cultists with dagger in hand and walked toward him. Paul turned to fly out the door...and ran right into Nate.

"Welcome, Paul...I want you to meet some friends of mine." Nate said.

Just as he was about to punch Nate in the face and run like hell, a familiar voice came from behind him. "Hello, Paul."

Paul stopped and turned around slowly in horror. Standing before him at the altar was the man who had stepped forward...his brother...

Unlike the Nephandi, who prefer corrupting and manipulating mages as their primary pawns, many demons prefer to destroy common Sleepers, for they have the power to Awaken their Avatars and feed them their own power as if it were a gift. Demons find it easier to influence mortals, simply because they share a deeper connection to them.

There are countless demon cults throughout the world. While some of these are false cults with no connections to actual demons, many are real. Led by Nephandi, Diabolists or other infernalists, these cults range in size from a handful of people to thousands of members. Such cultists range in power and interest from blind pawns with virtually no power to acolytes with little true power, from consorts who are often lesser Diabolists to cult leaders who are usually powerful Diabolists. Even cult leaders, however, are often no match for a cabal of true mages.

There are several types of cults, definable by their goals and beliefs. These range from bored suburbanites to deluded hedonists seeking new pleasures, disillusioned and corrupt clergymen, teenage Satanists, greedy yuppies and dark occultist-types seeking power.

Most people join these cults out of curiosity, greed or a desire to fit in somewhere. The people most easily attracted to these groups are those who already have an active but shallow interest in the occult. Few who possess real knowledge are so easily misled by demons and know the dangers involved in serving them. Some members of vampiric cults, commonly referred to as "Blood Cults," believe their vampiric masters to be demons. Nephandi, too, enjoy playing this game (see Herr Flax in Chapter One).

Some cultists believe their cults are interconnected with other cults through a conspiracy network controlled by powerful infernalists. The truth behind this idea lies with the Storyteller. Many investigators suspect that a great demonic conspiracy exists. Perhaps they're right...

Infernal Pacts

Now I have you with me
Under my power
Our love grows stronger now
With every hour
Look into my eyes, you'll see who I am,
My name is Lucifer, please take my hand
— Black Sabbath, "N.I.B."

For those who cannot resist the temptation of power, the cost is the highest possible: their very souls. No one owns anything of greater value, for it is the true immortal core of their being. Those who give it away of their own free will are the greatest of fools.

Simply by signing a pact with a demon allows the demon to remove a mortal's soul. They latch their soul to Hell and begin torturing it immediately. The tortured soul of the diabolist will cry out to them in nightmares and possibly in dark lonesome places. Most diabolists push such visions out of conscious thought and concentrate on their "rewards" for signing the pacts.

In return, the bound one might receive any of three various forms of power: Demonic Investments, demonic mutations which provide particular supernatural powers and mutations, to the demon worshipper; Ritualis Infernal, ritualized black Hedge Magic which does not cause Paradox; and diabolic magick, which Awakens the Avatar of the cultist and makes her a true Diabolist.

Selling the Soul

There's a sucker born every minute.
— Phineas Taylor Barnum

Once a cultist has been corrupted to the point where she is willing to give up her eternal soul in exchange for temporal power, the demon will appear to her alone and offer her the power. Demons know who is serious and who is not and will appear only to those who are truly overcome with powerlust.

At one time, pacts were simple. Humanity developed further, however, and the pacts did as well. Now the contracts which must be signed have more fine print and implied meanings in the demon's favor than any mortal lawyer could hope to duplicate. Once a bargain is struck between a demon and the mortal, a contract appears meeting those specifications. Once the pact is signed, the mortal receives the power as promised. In addition, the demon seems to reach inside of the mortal and pull out something composed of light, which it transforms into a small bauble of some sort: the mortal's soul.

There are also lesser pacts which involve exchanging services for one another, but these are commonly practiced by only the bravest and maddest of mages. A bargain is struck as to what each party will do for the other, and the contract appears and is signed by both. Of course, if the



demon can get away with it, it will trick the mortal into signing away much more. Demons who enter these pacts do so either because they were bound and summoned and believed it their best way of release, or because they desire a relationship with their summoners so they can eventually take their souls.

Accursed Magicks

*Satan now is wiser than of yore,
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.*

— Alexander Pope, *To Lord Bathurst*

Those who receive Dark Sorcery have their Avatars Awakened and shackled. Even though they believe their newfound power comes from their demon masters, it actually comes from their sold souls. Mages who sign pacts in exchange for greater power to work True Magick simply receive greater access to the power contained within their Avatars, so they too do not actually receive anything from their demons, except perhaps knowledge or secrets (which

may be false anyway.) One small but significant difference separates True Diabolists and Nephandi: the soul-sellers give themselves over to demonic masters who forcibly Awaken their powers for a price, while the Fallen Ones come to their Awakenings on their own. Any pacts which they make (see Chapter One) involve services beyond mere magick.

Practitioners of demon-induced or demon-enhanced magics are called Diabolists or warlocks. Some possess True Magick, but most possess black magic or Investments instead. Diabolic magic is intuitive; Diabolists do not have to spend years studying the arts before they know how to use magic. Instead, it just comes naturally to them, obeying their direct will rather than their beliefs. Nephandi who sell their souls to demons are always True Diabolists, meaning they gain Demonic Investments and extra power within their Spheres.

The details of Dark Sorcery, ritual magick, and Demonic Investments can be found in the Appendix.

Storyteller Hints: Diabolists and Infernalists

Diabolists come in two varieties: those who can work True Magick and those who know only the static gifts of Dark Sorcery and Demonic Investment. Invested mortals act free from Paradox, but their powers flow by the demon's whim and personal strength (see Ranks, above). Such a Diabolist may find his powers deserting him at the worst possible moment. The evil mages incur Paradox, but win greater flexibility and enlightenment of a sort.

Simple Diabolists are weaker than True Diabolists in that they receive Demonic Investments and knowledge of Dark Sorcery, but do not gain True Magick. Mortals who have their Avatars diabolically Awakened face a tragic Path; they have chosen the darkest road, one of slavery and eventual damnation. While this has its precedents (i.e. Faust), it's not a destiny many would choose. Nevertheless, there will always be those who will barter with what they do not understand.

Creating characters

While the morality of a Chronicle is up to you, player characters really should not deal with Infernal Powers. Besides living up to all the worst stereotypes of roleplaying games, such dark dealings often leave characters slaves of godlike masters. Mages ideally are movers and shakers, not pawns. The Paths of Ascension are carved by freedom, not servitude.

Infernalist mages who sell their souls win very little in game terms. They might get a rank or two in a new Sphere, learn some new Knowledges or Skills, get a few Merits or acquire a familiar or Ally. They cannot increase their Arete; this is a function of personal enlightenment, not outside influence. A mage who turns infernalist does not automatically become Nephandi, but has opened that particular door; they may seek him out on their own. Any faction other than the Fallen Ones will hunt down and punish a known infernalist severely.

True Diabolists receive the power of magick and may be created as any other Orphan (basically the same as creating a Hollow One) starting character. They can accumulate more power just like any other mage, but usually do so by corrupting others for their masters. Diabolists do have one specialty Sphere of their own choice (cost equals their current rating x 6), but all other Spheres are purchased at their current rating x 8. Many do not require foci (the pact is their focus), but use them anyway for effect.

Common Abilities for Diabolists include high ratings in Awareness, High Ritual, Intimidation, Seduction, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Cosmology, various Lores and/or Occult. All infernalists gain a Dark Fate, though they do not get any points for it. Typical Merits and Flaws include Dark Secret, Nightmares, Sadism/Masochism, Obsession, Animal Magnetism, Spirit Mentor (guess who?), Guardian Angel (demon), Spirit Magnet, Echoes, Primal Marks, Psychic Vampire and all kinds of Ties.



Characters



*Take a life, they're going cheap
Kill someone, no one will weep
Feed them yours, just pay your dues
We just want your soul to use*
— Black Sabbath, "Cornucopia"

Storytellers may wish to modify the characters below to better fit their Chronicles; players will be too familiar with these examples to make the demons below surprising or effective. Remember that demons, cultists and Diabolists will have motivations and personalities of their own. Such beings will not simply walk into a player character's Force bolt. Mages should be justifiably afraid to confront the Infernal.

Cultists

*You are the one who causes me pain
You are the one who causes me grief
You are the one who lied to me
It won't be long
Soon you will see...*
— King's X, "King"

These mortals have bartered some portion of their souls to Infernal service. Few among them are actually Diabolists. Most are simply bitter, greedy or hateful folks who enjoy reaping power at someone else's expense.

Most cultists are fairly unexceptional; the stats below reflect three types of cultist. While many are fanatical to their cause, a good amount are cowards who would sell out the cult were it not for the hazards involved. Nearly all cults have some vicious punishment for betrayal: live evisceration, hacksaw dismemberment, slow roasting and week-long torture parties are just a few of the unpleasantries visited upon unfaithful cultists.

Average Cultist: These characters will have Attributes of 2 for the most part, though some might have specialties of 3 or even 4. Their Abilities include Brawl, Streetwise, Firearms, Melee, Stealth, Investigation and Occult skills (one or two points in each). Low-ranking cultists have no supernatural powers.

Practiced Cultist: More dedicated cultists will have one Attribute category with 3 points each instead of 2 and may have one or two Attributes at 3 or 4. In addition to the Abilities above (two or three points in each), they may have Intimidation, Seduction, Subterfuge, Computer, Torture, Tracking or perhaps a few points in Lore. These characters will have some sort of extra perks: Merits or Flaws (usually Ties) or an Investment or two. They have already given some portion of their souls away.

Exceptional Cultist: These cult leaders and hard-core Diabolists have offered their souls and service to demonic masters and have something to show for their efforts. Assume each Exceptional cultist has Primary Attributes of 4, Secondary ones of 3 and Tertiary ones of 2. Several exceptional “gifts” — black magick rituals, Investments, Merits and Flaws—add to Abilities that match or exceed those of player characters. Such cultists are rare, influential and hopelessly damned.

The Black Stone Trinity

This three-member cult began as a wise-assed offshoot of an S.C.A. group. When Sandi Thornhill and William (do not call him “Billy!”) Pastario were kicked out of their local chapter for burning an inverted pentagram into a knight’s lawn, they formed a mercenary splinter group called the Black Stone Brethren. The short-lived pack quickly gained a reputation for dirty fighting and were banished from their resident kingdom. When Shawn McNamara, a black-metal film student, hooked up with the pair, their Satanic posturing took on deadly reality.

Shawn quickly drew the others in with hallucinogens, wild three-way sex and long speeches on the lure of darkness. With their help, he “conjured” Herr Flax (see Chapter One), who quickly bound the trio into a downward spiral of corruption. Their crimes of late have included gang rape, deadly assaults, thefts and robberies, animal torture and the creation of a dangerous hallucinogen called “witch’s powder.” They have yet to descend to human sacrifice, but this has been a matter of opportunity rather than decency.

The Black Stone Trinity, named for Sandi’s basalt altar, are a vicious pack of small-time devil worshippers. They do, however, have a good many friends and street-level connections. The local police have heard of the band, but have no hard evidence to tie them to any of their crimes. They consider themselves more knowledgeable than they actually are, but know enough to be dangerous, both to others and to themselves.

All three Black Handers are capable fighters (Dexterity 3, Brawl 3, Melee 4) and have a small group of followers who help them sell the powder. Sandi and Shawn are passably attractive, but William’s face is as ugly as his deeds. All three are Practiced cultists. This cult is small — small enough to be overlooked while doing a lot of damage.

The Cult of the Black Heart

The Cult of the Black Heart is devoted to the worship of a powerful demon known as Grostolis. The cult operates in secrecy throughout the world. Its membership spans every race, class and profession and includes a large number of Diabolists and a few vampires. With a membership of over 12,000, it is undoubtedly the largest of the real demon cults.



Grostolis, to whom the cult is dedicated, is said to rule six legions of lesser demons in Hell. The cult serves the demon by corrupting as many as possible into its service and by sacrificing innocent victims each month during the no-moon phase.

The Black Heart cult is broken down into various covens; each coven is lead by a high priest. These demon priests, mostly Diabolists of varying power, answer to the cult's arch-priest Victor Neubauer and his underlings. Neubauer is a powerful Diabolist, a former acolyte of the Celestial Chorus. He is extremely cunning and often removes other demon priests who become too powerful before they pose him a threat. Consider Neubauer to be a Diabolist of some power — stronger than an Exceptional Cultist, though not as strong as a competent mage.

The cult holds meetings once a week in secluded, out-of-the-way locations, often underground. The cultists use false names to identify themselves and have many secret ways of verifying true membership in the cult. They commonly wear black-hooded robes during their rituals. These rites span all know types of Black Mass, ranging from ritual rape to the sacrifice of newborns.

The Order of Jadrax

This cult is strongest in the Northwestern United States. The cult has over 300 members spanning five cities and is dedicated to Jadrax, a demon of moderate power. Jadrax possesses many occult secrets he shares with his worthy followers, though such knowledge always brings doom upon them.

A vampire known as the Hadaric runs Jadrax's Order. This elder Kindred feeds from his cultists, thus making it his blood cult as well. He has made ghouls of Jadrax's favored worshippers and instructs them in the ways of Dark Sorcery. This Hadaric is a fearsome enemy, an elder vampire with three Demonic Investments and fourth-level Dark Sorcery.

The Order of Jadrax appears on the surface to be the remnants of a Greek mystery cult, but its demonic teaching originate from ancient Sumerian lore. Members of the cult conduct the common demonic rituals associated with other cults and wear blood red robes during their ceremonies. All members carry razor-sharp sacrificial daggers which they use on both themselves and others in odd bloodletting rituals. In addition, the cultists all wear rings bearing the symbol of Jadrax: a circle with an X through it, with the letter "J" in the middle of the X.

Many of the cultists are rich businessmen who use their wealth and influence to assist the Order of Jadrax in seducing potential members by providing for their worldly needs.

The Cult of Vugarius

This demon cult consists of over 300 members. Located in a small town in New Mexico, this cult is dedicated to Vugarius, an ancient demon who gains pleasure by inflicting pain upon infants.

The cult is controlled by a Horus Longstreet, a powerful Diabolist. He once traveled into the town of Bracketon and corrupted the entire place into the Vugarius' service. Since all the law enforcement officers, politicians, doctors and other "pillars of the community" were the first to turn, the remaining majority of the population fell right into line. Those who would not convert were sacrificed.

The cult is involved in ritual sacrifice of humans of all ages, though infants are most prized. Most members are Practiced Cultists by now and their leader is an Exceptional one. They have ties to a group of Mexican slavers who provide them with numerous sacrifices. The cultists are preparing for a great sacrifice, called the Hecatomb, in which over 250 people will be ritually slaughtered in a single night. They keep their slaves locked away in underground holding cells until that time. The ritual will supposedly give Vugarius enough power to manifest himself onto Earth permanently.

Demons

*Unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer,
Conspired against our God with Lucifer,
And are forever damned with Lucifer.*

— Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

The "ranks" below refer to the classifications in the Storyteller's Hints above; they are not linked in any way to real Infernal titles. "Demonic Powers" refers to Investments that the demon can use itself while "Charms" are innate spirit powers. Spheres and Arete are listed for those demons who can use True Magick. Listed Attributes reflect the demon's Materialized form, which it must assume to attack in a physical (non-magical) way.

All demons possess Appear, Airt Sense, Materialize, Mind Speech and Healing Charms, though the Materialization will be limited by certain factors (see above). Spirit Away allows the demon to take someone to its personal Hell. For the rules of Possession, see above.

Servitor: Nagrogasto the Mandragora

Willpower 4, Rage 5, Gnosis 4, Power 25

Charms: Armor, Blast Flame (5 dice), Blighted Touch, Control Wind (5 points), Corruption, Create Fires, Shapeshift, Tracking

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Judge

Materialized Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2 (use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 1, Cosmology 3, Culture 4, Dodge 6, Enigmas 4, Etiquette 4, Expression 3, Intuition 6, Intimidation 3, Linguistics 7, Occult 5, Research 2, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 5

Background: Nagrogasto is the servant of Grostolis, an archduke of the Inferno who controls 6 of the 666 legions. This minor servitor is charged with corrupting mortals into giving over their souls to Grostolis in exchange for some of their own power.

This incarnation is only the most recent and successful of Nagrogasto's incarnations. His current identity has survived for over 55 years, a long time for a servitor-rank demon.

Demeanor: Conniver

Materialized Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2
(use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Dodge 4, Intuition 3, Subterfuge 5, Stealth 5, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 5, Occult 4

Background: The Imp claims to be as old as conscious thought itself, but the original edition of the *Malleus*

Servitor: Abzu, the Gatherer

Willpower 6, Rage 8, Gnosis 6, Power (now 10; he gains 5 Power per point of Quintessence he siphons from nearby mages, 10 points per host he Possesses (once successful) and 20 points if that host is an Awakened being (a mage, vampire, werewolf, etc.)

Charms: Animate, Blighted Touch, Disorient, Drain Quintessence (5 points; allows Abzu to suck one point of Quintessence per Brawl success from his target. Difficulty 6), Possession, Tracking

Materialized Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5 (use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Brawl 3, Dodge 4

Background: Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The demon known as Abzu, the Gatherer, embodies the corruption that the taste of power can create. Eons ago, Abzu roamed the Tellurian, searching for unwitting mages to satisfy his insatiable hunger for Quintessence. In turn, the Quintessence made him more powerful with each feeding. However, with each feeding, his hunger grew larger and could never be satisfied.

Hundreds of years ago, Ahl-i-Batin mages imprisoned him in an ancient vault deep within the deserts of Persia. There he dwelled for well over a thousand years, tormented by his voracious hunger. However, in the Middle Ages, the vault was discovered by three French knights of the First Crusade who

mistakenly thought it to be the final resting place of the Holy Grail. The knights entered, only to be torn to shreds by the imprisoned demon. To Abzu's delight, one of the knights, Henri Pardeux, was a would-be mage whose Avatar had not yet Awakened. Abzu, knowing that his astral form could no longer exist in the Tellurian outside the vault, entered and possessed the unAwakened knight and resumed the knight's present course.

The possessed Henri emerged from the desert some 120 years later, having not aged a day since his possession by Abzu. The Church thought Henri's virtual immortality a miracle. In time, Henri grew influential in government affairs and played an important role in engineering the Third Crusade to crush the Ahl-i-Batin who had imprisoned him centuries before.

A mage of the Cabal of Pure Thought soon became aware of an almost diabolic resonance in Henri's presence—a strange aura for one granted immortality by God. His suspicions were confirmed when one of the Cabal's knights witnessed Abzu slaughter an unAwakened mage late one night. The Cabal of Pure Thought confronted the demon, narrowly subduing him and imprisoning him in a cathedral high within the French Alps. They sealed Abzu in the catacombs beneath the cathedral with a bronze sigil inscribed with a warning to those who might stumble into the place. Abzu remains there today, awaiting the time when he shall be released and satiate his hunger...



Image: Abzu exists in the Tellurian by possessing a host, usually a mage. One common factor of each description of Abzu, however, is the black mist which surrounds him at all times. This mist, visible only with a Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 6, is a manifestation of Abzu's Quintessence hunger. The mist can Materialize if need be, assuming the shape of thousands of tendrils, each with razor sharp barbs at the end. These barbs form leech-like orifices that siphon Quintessence from an impaled target. A Sleeper can supply the demon with up to 3 Quintessence; a non-mage supernatural is good for 5.

Roleplaying Hints: None, really. Chow down!

Tempter: Jadrax, Fiend of Secrets

Willpower 8, Rage 8, Gnosis 7, Power 40

Charms: All but the following: Calcify, Cleanse the Blight, Forest Sense, Solidify Reality. Jadrax's damaging Charms have 8 points (or do 6 dice) each.

Demonic Powers: 3 pts. of Lightning Speed, Emotion Projection. Jadrax knows all Paths of Dark Sorcery at rank 5.

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 8 (use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Alchemy 5, Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 7, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Cosmology 7, Culture 2, Enigmas 8, Etiquette 5, Expression 3, Intuition 4, Intimidation 6, Law 6 (Codes of Hell), Leadership 3, Linguistics 4, Lores (all at 4 each), Melee 3, Occult 9, Research 9, Science 3, Subterfuge 7, Technology 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 4, Forces 2, Life 3, Matter 2, Mind 3, Prime 4, Spirit 4, Time 2

Arete: 7

Background: Jadrax is an ancient demon of occult secrets. He was one of the first demons to share the black arts with mortals. He controls his own cult, mentioned previously in this chapter.

Image: Jadrax appears however a person wishes him to appear, so long as his appearance is enigmatic. All see him as a mysterious figure who grants them secret knowledge.

Roleplaying Notes: You have studied all the demonic arts, and you have acquired many souls. Now you take enjoyment out of teaching mortals demonic secrets just to watch them ruin their lives. You are one of the most learned of all demons, and you are often called upon by more powerful demons for your great intellect.

Tempter: Vugarius, the Stealer of Breaths

Willpower 9, Rage 8, Gnosis 8, Power 45

Charms: As Jadrax, above. Vugarius' damage Charms do 10 points (or 7 dice) each.

Demonic Powers: Apport Object (a huge black sword: Strength +4, difficulty 7), Eyes of the Abyss, 4 points of Lightning Speed, Underworld Passage. Vugarius has 5 points in the Paths of Lust and Torment, Fires of Inferno and Summoning.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8 (use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 8, Brawl 4, Cosmology 7, Dodge 5, Enigmas 4, Etiquette 4, Expression 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 6, Leadership 5, Linguistics 4, Melee 3, Occult 6, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 7

Background: Vugarius has long been a tormentor of humanity. He has taken great pleasure down through history in causing the deaths of infants. He cannot take their souls, but he still gets great pleasure in watching them die. He does, however, collect the souls of his followers. This demon is brutal and enjoys the agony of others; sacrifices and punishments among his cult take the most sadistic means imaginable.

Image: Vugarius seldom appears to his cultists, but when he does appear, it is in the form of a thin, old man at least in his 90s. He wears a black suit with a black rose on the lapel. He smells of sulfur, and when he speaks, people hear it in their minds as well as in their ears.

Roleplaying Notes: You enjoy the pain and death of mortals, especially children. You have corrupted an entire town in New Mexico which may soon bring you to earth. Should they fail, you will begin corrupting other small towns into your service, as you never realized it was so easy. Should they succeed, you will walk the earth causing great destruction.

Demon Lord: Grostolis, Archduke of the Inferno

Background: Grostolis is one of the most powerful of the demons. It has achieved great power by collecting souls, and it now needs very little from humanity. Still, it does occasionally toy with its cult, which has grown to an impressive size.

Image: This virtual god appears however it pleases to each individual who views it. Although it rarely manifests on Earth, its powers in the Umbra are such that it defies mere statistics.

Roleplaying Notes: You are an archduke who commands many legions. None may oppose you. You are the epitome of pure evil, and everything you touch becomes tainted with your dark energies. You are vile and cunning, and you seek even great power among the Infernal hierarchy.





Chapter Five: The Umbrood

Outside

The circus gathering

Moved silently along the rainswept boulevard.

The procession moved on the shouting is over

The fabulous freaks are leaving town

They are driven by a strange desire

Unseen by the human eye

The carnival is over.

— Dead Can Dance, "The Carnival is Over"

Strange Denizens



Zachariah walked resolutely up to the gleaming palace, followed quickly by Nick.

"Hey, hold up!" Nick yelled. "I really think I should handle the introductions here. You're not very much of a people person, you know."

Zachariah stopped and turned to look back at Nick disdainfully. "Oh? Because I do not 'jive' with the punks you hang out with, that disqualifies me here?"

"Well, yeah. Look at the facts: these Lords are fickle beings. One wrong move, and they're liable to consign you to whatever slave pits they can think of — unless, of course, they find you charming. And, Zach, old pal, I don't think that's you."

"Hmph. Thank you, O Cultist of Ecstasy, for your wise and knowledgeable words. Now grow up! Do you know the Title and Rank of he whom we approach? Do you know his Dominions and Servitors? Can you name which Seat he holds in the Court? Or guess the antiquity of his Peerage and thus know how to address him? Hmm? Tell me that!"

Nick looked about nervously. "Uh...Well, let's see... Judging from the looks of the place, well kept up and all, I'd say he was pretty high up. A Viscount?"

Zachariah shook his head, his arms crossed as he waited for a proper response.

"Okay then, he must be an Earl."

Zachariah nodded. "Now, his Dominion?"

Nick looked around again. "Uh, well, he's got a lot of expensive looking architecture here. Um, I guess he's a Lord of... oh, Wealth and Riches?"

Zachariah shook his head.

"All right, then. What is it?" Nick said, resigned.

Zachariah smiled, "Lord Ulmo commandeth all things of Profession and Guild, especially concerning Craft. His Servitors are the Gnomes who maketh the Machines of Industry. You were close with Riches, for he is allied with them, and his Suit is the Pentacle of Earth. But you would have insulted him gravely if you did not begin your introductions with some glowing praise of his Works."

Zachariah stood looking at Nick, who muttered something under his breath.

"What? What was that?" Zachariah said.

"Nothing. I just said maybe you should do the introductions." Nick said.

"All right." Zachariah turned around and began walking toward the palace again.

Nick followed, muttering, "Trust a damn Order of Hermes to keep up with this bureaucratic crap..."

Out there, somewhere, they exist. The Others. Those who are not like us. To some, such as the Technocracy, these Others are cause for extreme paranoia. They project all their fears onto these outsiders. To others, namely the Tradition mages, the Others are a source of fascination, a chance to learn and expand perceptions and consciousness. These Others are seen as potential aid on the path of Ascension.

The Umbra holds many strange people, places and things. Mages call the residents of the spirit worlds the Umbrood. (Werewolves call them simply "spirits," or by their type, such as Gaffling or Incarna; see below.) There are many different types of Umbrood, enough to defy simple descriptions and attempts at typology. Indeed, the far reaches of the Deep Umbra apparently holds things totally incomprehensible to human minds (at least, as of yet...).

What Are Spirits?

Spirits are defined as those beings who reside in the Umbra (both Near and Deep). More specifically, however, they are those beings whose "physical" bodies are made of ephemera, rather than of matter. Ephemera is the matter of the Umbra, especially the Spirit World and the Astral Umbra (Plasm is the matter of the Underworld; see **Wraith: The Oblivion** for more details.)

Mortals cannot affect spirit beings without magick unless that spirit is materialized or the mortal has some deep spiritual connection (Garou or Fey blood, or three or more dots in Spirit magick). Life and Matter are useless in the Umbrae. Many Realms in the Umbra are made of matter, however, and the usual rules apply there unless otherwise noted. Ephemera is a very pliable substance when it comes to manipulating objects or things in the Umbra, but spirits with Willpower cannot be so easily affected.

The Mage spirit rules have been changed for compatibility with **Werewolf**; see the Appendix for these new rules. The **Werewolf** sourcebook, **Umbra: The Velvet Shadow**, gives more details on ephemera.

Practical distinctions of things from beyond

The term "Umbrood" generically refers to a variety of otherworldly beings. Even the wisest of mages argue about the distinctions between them: what one sees as a god, another will consider a powerful spirit and still another may regard as some extra-dimensional entity. The divisions below, however, may clarify different types of Umbrood for the Storyteller. Such distinctions should remain nebulous to the players.

- **Gods (AKA Celestines, Incarna, Entities, Pure Ones):** Whether or not such beings should be regarded as mere "spirits" remains a point of contention. It is said their dreams shaped the Tellurian. Whatever their origin, these beings are power personified and would seem to predate

humanity. That some sort of connection exists between the gods and their worshippers (or lack thereof) is unquestionable. The influence that humanity has over these entities, however, remains unknown.

- **Spirits (see sidebar below for ranks and types):** A term often applied to ghosts, elemental spirits and embodied concepts, "spirit" properly refers to beings composed of ephemera instead of matter. Life and Matter magicks are useless against such spirits, and they rarely know true death.

- **Ghosts (AKA wraiths, the Restless Dead):** The souls of dead people (or other things) who refuse to pass on to final rest. Guided by passions, ghosts and ancestral spirits can be contacted and battled with Spirit magick, but have powers of their own to call upon.

- **Realm Creatures:** Beings from material Realms, they are as substantial as any mage. They either pass directly from their Realms to Earth or wander the Umbrae through Spirit magick.

- **Demons and Demon Hordes:** Chapter Four goes into these beings in greater detail. True demons are spirits with the power to materialize on Earth. Demon hordes are often extra-terrestrial material entities who lack the power to cross through the Barriers themselves. The mysterious Zigg'Rauaglurr and Ka Luon are usually lumped into the latter category.

- **Paradox Spirits:** Ephemeral creatures created from fear personified. Some generate spontaneously while others have Realms of their own. See Chapter Two.

- **Mythic Beasts:** Material creatures who fled (or were taken) into the Umbrae and Realms when magick became suppressed on Earth. Some travel on their own power, while others must be summoned or carried by Spirit magick. These are usually physical beings, although some powerful mythic concepts manifest as spirit Preceptors. Denizens of the Digital Web fall into the former category. See Chapter Three for more details.

The Three Worlds



The Umbra has three different worlds (planes, divisions, etc.): the Middle, or Spirit World, known to the werewolves; the Underworld, or Dark Umbra, the place of the dead; and the Upper World, or Astral Umbra (sometimes called the High Umbra). It is the Astral Umbra which mages are mainly concerned with.

Some mages do have truck with the other worlds (the Dreamspeakers in the Spirit World, or the Euthanatos in the Underworld), but the rest of the Traditions have trouble entering these other worlds. For the most part, passing the invisible boundaries between these triadic paradigms requires a change in consciousness, a willingness to accept and understand the laws and rules of "nature" that govern them. A high rating in Cosmology helps to dissolve this barrier of preconceptions.

Almost every Awakened human (with the proper Spirit Sphere rating) has the ability, deep down, to enter the Spirit World—it is a primordial inheritance. But this ability is almost always wiped out through years of societal and civilized conditioning, so much so that even most of the Awakened still have trouble accepting it. The ancient war of humanity versus nature has touched every human. An Awakened Avatar cannot heal those scars overnight. Only the Dreamspeakers and the Verbena have re-conditioned themselves to this most natural of worlds. Mages with the Primordial Essence also have an easier time entering this world.

No one enters the Dark Umbra unless they are dead. Mages can always concoct an exception to every rule, and some can enter the lands of the dead while their hearts still beat. It is not easy, and the very process is known to have scared the life out of some aspirants (or at least left many mages' hair white). The Euthanatos know more of such secrets than most.

The Astral Umbra is the plane a mage's Awakened Avatar is inclined towards. As an Order of Hermes mage once stated: "Like attracts like; things of a high nature naturally rise, while things of base nature fall." Thus, the Awakened naturally go to the High Umbra, while the beasts and the dead are pulled elsewhere. The Dreamspeakers and the Euthanatos, of course, call this type of magickal philosophy flawed, idealistic, arrogant and hopelessly Western. Nonetheless, they have no better an explanation for the phenomenon.

Technomancer Viewpoints

The spirit world frustrates the Technocracy. It resists their best efforts, defies their paradigms and squares the playing field between technomagick and the more mystick variety. Iteration X refuses to accept the spirit world at all. They maintain that the Umbrae are merely constructs of ancient mages that will eventu-



ally fall before the will of science. The Progenitors are more pragmatic; the fluid reality here beckons to their sense of discovery. There are (of course!) natural laws governing the place, but the odd nature of Umbral molecular structure bears investigation... The Syndicate knows more about the Umbrae than they are willing to admit. Their Enforcement division has known ties to several paranormal researchers who delve into the common unconscious, and data base raids on their Constructs show that they have extensive, though spotty, notes on the Three Worlds. The New World Order has tried in vain to map the Worlds while wiping them out by collective disbelief. They, like the others, admit that there is something there but refuse to concede that it is in any way supernatural.

Only the Void Engineers keep an open mind about the Umbrae. Their missions to map the Worlds out of existence is doomed, and they know it. Instead, their research seeks to explain spirit phenomena in a way that satisfies their fellow Technomancers. To this end, they plumb the Deep Umbra, learn Spirit magick, enlist Umbrood allies and capture specimens whenever possible, destroying manifestations that get out of hand. The other Conventions tolerate the Engineers' eccentricities for the sake of the Barriers. It was the Seekers of the Void who discovered the secrets of mind, space, form and spirit that allowed the Order of Reason to strengthen the Gauntlet and map the unknown world into submission.

Few Technomancers are strong in Spirit magick. Because it defies their static beliefs, the spirit world stymies the Conventions' knowledge. Iteration X considers Spirit a non-existent Sphere of influence and knows nothing about it at all. Only the Syndicate and Void Engineers can, for game purposes, learn higher than the second rank of Spirit magick. Exceptions exist, of course, but they are rare and often regarded suspiciously by their comrades.

The High Umbra: A World of Ideas

Elic sent his mind into twisting tunnels of logic, across endless plains of ideas, through mountains of symbolism and endless universes of alternate truths...

— Michael Moorcock, *Elic of Melniboné*

The Astral Umbra is a place characterized by ideas. Concept and symbology underlie everything there, although understanding these concepts can be quite a chore. They are often perplexing and enigmatic. Among the strange beings encountered here are living concepts, spiritual beings that represent certain ideals, sort of like living Platonic Forms. Thus, a mage can sometimes meet the color red, although communicating with it is another matter entirely. Just because these "ideas" seem to have motives does not mean they possess intelligence. However, a renowned Cultist of Ecstasy named Xeno claims to have had an intense debate with the "idea of duality" once (he argued for plurality). Those who know him mutter that he was tripping on drugs at the time, but he says that's what allowed him to speak with this being in the first place.



Umbral Realms include the fabled heavens and hells that have carved a large piece from the formless spirit through the power of the collective unconscious. While true afterlives are said to be found in the Underworld (see below), a good many souls who embrace intellectual concepts instead of spiritual beliefs end up in these Realms before or after their deaths. The majority of these wind up here through bargains or pacts, but some rare mortals who travel astrally or who advance themselves to a high state of enlightenment (including, but not limited to, true mages) pass into the Astral Realms, sometimes without meaning to.

Astral Realms are shaped by all kinds of ideas—some are said to resemble chessboards, long corridors with possibilities behind each door, geomid-spotted landscapes or stuffy Victorian reading rooms. The possibilities are literally endless. A good source for astral landscapes is the art of M.C. Escher. Visual illusions abound throughout the Umbra, causing many mages to lose their way in travel—take the wrong byway and you might find yourself in an upside down version of your actual destination. The Astral Umbra is similar to a trip through Lewis Carroll's Looking Glass or down the rabbit hole to Wonderland.

One of the many odd Realms here is the Well of Collectivity, apparently a representation of the human collective unconscious. That the Well exists is a fact; it has been visited by many mages. But getting there is not exactly a set process. There are rumored to be rites to take one there, but these are mere rumors.

The Middle Umbra: Spiritual Reflections

*I heard an old voice say
'Don't go far from the land
The seasons have their way
No mortal can understand.'*

—Loreena McKinnett, "Courtyard Lullaby"

The World of Things As They are offers a true reflection of the Tellurian's nature, free in many ways from the concepts of humanity. While intellectual mages pass into the High Realms by default, sorcerers attuned to the natural order may find their way here.

The Realms of this Umbra reflect deep dreams and nightmares of the All. Erebus purifies erring souls, while the Battleground and Atrocity Realm personify victimization and conflict. Pangaea retain the Earth as it once was, while the Scar writhes beneath the Technocracy's worst aspects. Those who travel the Moon Paths of the Spirit World must deal with different beings than the High Umbra's Epiphlings—animal spirits, plant spirits, lunar spirits, elementals and malicious Banes. The Garou often wander here, and they are intimately familiar with many of its denizens. There is no better guide here than a Garou Theurge (shaman)—if you can find one.

More details can be found in the **Werewolf** rulebook or the **Werewolf** sourcebooks: **Umbra: The Velvet Shadow** and the **Book of the Wyrm**.

Storyteller Hints: The Three Worlds

The outer lands of the Umbrood are the most challenging aspects of **Mage**. By their nature, they resist easy classifications and hard statistics. All things are possible within the Three Worlds, especially in the far Realms of the Deep Umbra. While **The Book of Shadows** goes into more detail about the spirit worlds, the following suggestions may shed some light on running Umbral adventures:

- Keep things unpredictable. The spirit realm is one of constant possibility. Don't allow it to become stagnant or cozy.
- Remember that the universe is a very big place. More things exist in the Tellurian than we could ever publish. If some Realm seems like a good idea, fit it into one of the Three Worlds and go for it.
- Avoid overshadowing the material world. Earth, after all, is the reality the mages are fighting for. The wonders of the Otherworlds have lured away many a powerful mage...
- Nourish your sense of wonder and your players' as well.

Fighting, magick and navigation

Physically entering the Umbrae requires Spirit 3, although Spirit 2 and Mind 5 can shift a mage's consciousness into the spirit worlds. Correspondence will not move a mage from the physical world to the spiritual, but will function to shift perceptions around the Umbra if the mage has a high Cosmology Knowledge. This skill is essential for finding your way around the Umbrae. Without it, your mages will get hopelessly lost.

Navigating the Worlds requires Wits + Cosmology rolls, with difficulties from 5 to 10. It helps if the mage has been there before or has a guide. Getting lost is hazardous; botching can be fatal. Umbral pathways — airts, moon paths, etc. — reduce the difficulty of travel.

As stated earlier, Life and Matter magick are worthless unless the mage is facing a material (or Materialized) opponent. The Spirit Sphere acts as Life magick when used against beings of plasm or ephemera, and Entropy 4 + Prime 2 inflicts damage against such beings on their home ground.

All magick is considered coincidental in the Near Umbra; Paradox does not exist at all in the Deep Umbra and spectacular Effects are possible. Mages use their full Arete for magick rolls here. Beginners should tread lightly.

Running The High Umbra

Spirits of this Umbra range from malice and virtue incarnate (angels and demons) to abstract designs that communicate telepathically. The viewer often has more to do with the way that such a spirit is perceived than the spirit itself does; if a mage expects to see virtue as a medieval seraphim, than that's often the way she will see it.

Storytelling High Umbral encounters can be quite a challenge. The trick is that the Storyteller does not have to understand the spirit himself. In fact, the less he comprehends it, the less chance the players have of figuring it out, which is exactly what this realm is often about: confusion. The best method here is to let loose, to use whatever associations come to mind, using the player's reactions to the spirit as a Rorschach pattern of sorts. Introduce anything that immediately comes to mind into the story. Don't be afraid, just do it; worry about the consequences later. And let the player's own puzzle-solving give you even more ideas.

Those who like to tug at the Gordian Knot of enigmas and paradoxes, might want to think up a few thought problems to give the characters for their next game. A book of such mental puzzles is a good source, such as Douglas Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach* or *Metamagical Themes*. Other examples are such classics as Zeno's Paradox or a Zen Koan. These can be delivered in the form of questioning spirits. When the characters correctly answer the puzzle, or circumvent answering it somehow, a major clue in the story can be revealed.

Running the Middle Umbra

This world epitomizes the best and worst aspects of the reality it reflects (or is that the other way around? Players should never be sure). Clean and spiritual places appear as colorful glens, while Technomancer outposts resemble heavily webbed cages covered by scurrying Pattern Spiders. Horizon Realms resemble floating balloons or structures in this Umbra — hanging in space, connected by the cables of Quintessence which form their portals to Earth. Most are inaccessible from the spirit worlds unless they have a specific "back door" leading out there.

The mystic landscape should have a more primal, sensual texture than the cerebral High Umbra. Sights, sounds and scents are more vivid than anywhere on Earth, and many things have inner spirits called *naturae* (see below). Corruption can often be seen here as well, in the form of grasping Banes (also below).

The Spirit World's physics and atmosphere come from the folktales and legends of indigenous peoples the world over, whether from Southwest Native Americans, Yakut shamans in Siberia or Outback aboriginals in Australia. We all know these stories, or their like, from childhood, and can easily conjure them up again if we try. If stumped, just grab a children's fantasy book and use it as the theme or plot of your story.

Running the Low Umbra

Storytellers are advised to avoid the Dead Lands. They are dreaded and mysterious and should stay that way. If death, even the half-existence of the Shadowlands, were to become common knowledge to mages, it would lose its mystique. Even Euthanatos are out of their element here. Storytellers should impose horrific penalties and perils on mages who venture into Death's Playground.

The Low Umbra: The Lands of Death

*Mony a one for him makes main
But nane shall ken where he is gane
O'er his white bones when they are bare O
The wind sall blow for ever mair*
—"Twa Corbies" (Traditional folk song)

Few mages can visit the Land of the Dead and return intact. Fewer still even know how to find it. Most visitors either go insane or have their souls ripped from their bodies by the vengeful dead. Only the Euthanatos, some Nephandi and a handful of Dreamspeakers know the secrets of this world.

The Death Tradition sends their initiates on a brief trip into the so-called Shadowlands, where Restless ghosts speak to them or try to harvest their souls for unknown purposes. Some never return from this trip, but most do, emerging with visions of a decayed half-world where twilight suffuses a bleak Penumbra. A fortunate few claim to have seen the Great Unmaking, a tempest where souls are broken down, recycled and reincarnated. Many Euthanatos emerge with pity for the Restless Dead who dread this cycle. So many ghosts, they say, cling too tenaciously to their former lives instead of rejoining the karmic wheel. These unfortunates jam up the works and should either be put to final rest or used to further the Tradition's Earthly ends.

More information about the Underworld can be found in **Wraith: The Oblivion**.

Umbral Beings



The following beings all have certain Traits unique to Astral entities. These Traits are sometimes recognized by the entity itself, but were actually created by Order of Hermes mages in the early Middle Ages. They have been adopted by the Council of Nine as a method of identifying astral beings. The Court of Shadows seems to enjoy playing along.

Dominion: This represents not only a physical territory (a realm or domain) but a psychic purview, an action or quality that the entity has control over. This often-broad category gives a Storyteller an idea of just what powers the being can marshal, and in what ways it can aid characters (in return for something from them, of course).

Title: The rank the entity possesses: Greater Entities, Lords, Preceptors and Minions. Dual titles reflect High and Middle Umbra beings or alternate perceptions.

Servitors: Other beings aligned to the entity, always of a lower title. Lords have Preceptors and Minions as their Servitors, while Preceptors have only Minions.

The Greater Entities

These beings transcend Umbral limitations, existing in the Deep Umbra and beyond the Urnion. Greater Entities are too large, their beings too encompassing, to even begin to make Traits for. Simply assume that they get what they want. Though some manifest their influence in the material world, they are literally godlike. These are the dreamers whose will set the universe in motion. Despite this, their welfare reflects their status on Earth.

Gaia

Some mages, notably Dreamspeakers, say that Gaia, the Earth Mother, is the supreme spirit of the Tellurian and that the beings of the worlds are all Her children. Other mages refer to this creator spirit as God, Allah, Ymir, Wakinyan Tanka or simply The One. The Technocracy, of course, denies that such a being exists.

Dominion: All (or just Nature)

Title: Greater Entity

Servitors: Spiritual mages, Garou werewolves, spirits of animal, plant and stone, religious Sleepers

Ialdabaoth

Many Nephandi speak of and revere an ancient and evil entity they call Ialdabaoth, whom they believe is responsible for all the flaws in the world. They also speak of Ialdabaoth as the Wyrn, although some Nephandi say the "Wyrn" is only Ialdabaoth's bestial or emotional aspect. These mages claim Ialdabaoth is the whole being, that Ial, another spirit which represents cunning and intellect, and the Wyrn combine to make the whole. But other Nephandi dispute this and have been known to war among themselves over this religious issue. Dreamspeakers who know the Garou cosmology will not place this "Wyrn" near Gaia's height, but refer to it as a Celestine or the Tiamat (see below). Other traditions see this being as Lucifer, the Satan, or any of a host of other names.

Ialdabaoth is some sort of serpent being, a tempter and corrupter. He(?) is fiercely cunning and nigh impossible to outsmart (although Ial is believed to be a bit dimmer). He resides somewhere in the Deep Umbra, but there are thought to be a few Realms allied to him in the Astral Umbra.

Dominion: Corruption, Temptation

Title: Greater Entity

Servitors: Some Nephandi mages, demons, serpent spirits

Uthra or Celestines

These are, quite literally, gods. They are revered (though not worshipped) by the Celestial Chorus as beings closer to the One than humans. It is said that they are the very first thoughts of the Creator at the Dawn of the Tellurian, evolved into powerful and complex beings over time, yet still retaining their purity. Some mages believe they are some of the very first shards of the Pure Ones, greater and more pure than the splinters which humanity possesses.

Some call such beings Celestines, ranging in power from the Great Triat (Wyrn, Weaver and Wyld) of Garou cosmology to the old gods of humanity's past. Others label them Uthra, intellectual concepts rather than natural ones. Most require a connection of some sort to the material world to have some influence there and are known to take avatars (incarnations of divine power, not soul-shards) from time to time. These avatars, when they manifest, are unimaginably powerful. The "true" forms of such beings are even more so.

These beings are too powerful to represent with Traits, and are almost always encountered through their servants or avatars, usually powerful Aeons, totems or Jagglings. Many take the forms of ancient or obscure gods and goddesses, banished from common human belief but still powerful nevertheless.

Common aspects of human nature and elemental phenomena—war, prosperity, luck, fertility, mercy, wisdom, death, dreams, craft, merriment, mischief, and many others—have some kind of Celestine which epitomizes those things and personifies them. Some cultural cosmologies link them with planetary bodies as well—Luna, Helios and Jupiter are just a few such examples. Avatars of these entities go by hundreds of names and identities; the aspect one meets depends on what one expects to see. An avatar of fortune's Celestine may appear as Tyche, Kore, White Buffalo or the Angel Raphael. It is the perceiver who decides (usually subconsciously) which incarnation of the Celestine he sees. All aspects are one being, although its proponents might disagree.

Dominion: Some chosen aspect

Title: Uthra/Celestines

Servitors: Aeons, Incarna, totems, avatars

The Lesser Powers

*The yellow jester does not play
But gently pulls the strings
And smiles as the puppets dance
In the court of the crimson king*

— King Crimson, "The Court of the Crimson King"

These entities, never referred to as "lesser" in their presence, nevertheless occupy a lower strata in humanity's flawed understanding of cosmic entities. Most reside in either the High Umbral Realms, serving the greater entities in the reflection of the mind, or the Middle World, personifying primal nature.

Many Astral beings like to play at politics and engage in other human-like pursuits. As they are shaped by the whims and wills of sentients, these powers reflect mortal nature and culture more than their more elemental Middle Umbral counterparts.

The spirits of the Middle World do not engage in human-like trivialities. Their natures are not shaped by human conceit but by elemental force. Nevertheless, most desire some connection to the material world. Legends state that there are godlike entities of the Lower Worlds, but these are often astral aspects of humanity's worst side, not unique spirits. The Underworld, however, holds many secrets...

Aeons/Incarna

The Aeons are the Servitors of the Uthras and Celestines. Most defy simple categorization. Their Dominions are ideals and concepts, and they usually pair off with each other to give birth to different permutations of their concepts (i.e. Thesis and Antithesis creates Synthesis). Incarna represent some force or face of nature and gain or fail as their Earthly aspects do. All Aeons and Incarna have their own Realms.

Astral Aeons frequently manifest in small sub-aspects called Epiphlings. These minor spirits concentrate some shard of the Aeon's essence and embody it. An Epiphling of peace might appear as a radiant motherly woman, a glowing ball of soft blue light or a noble historical peace-

Umbral Powers

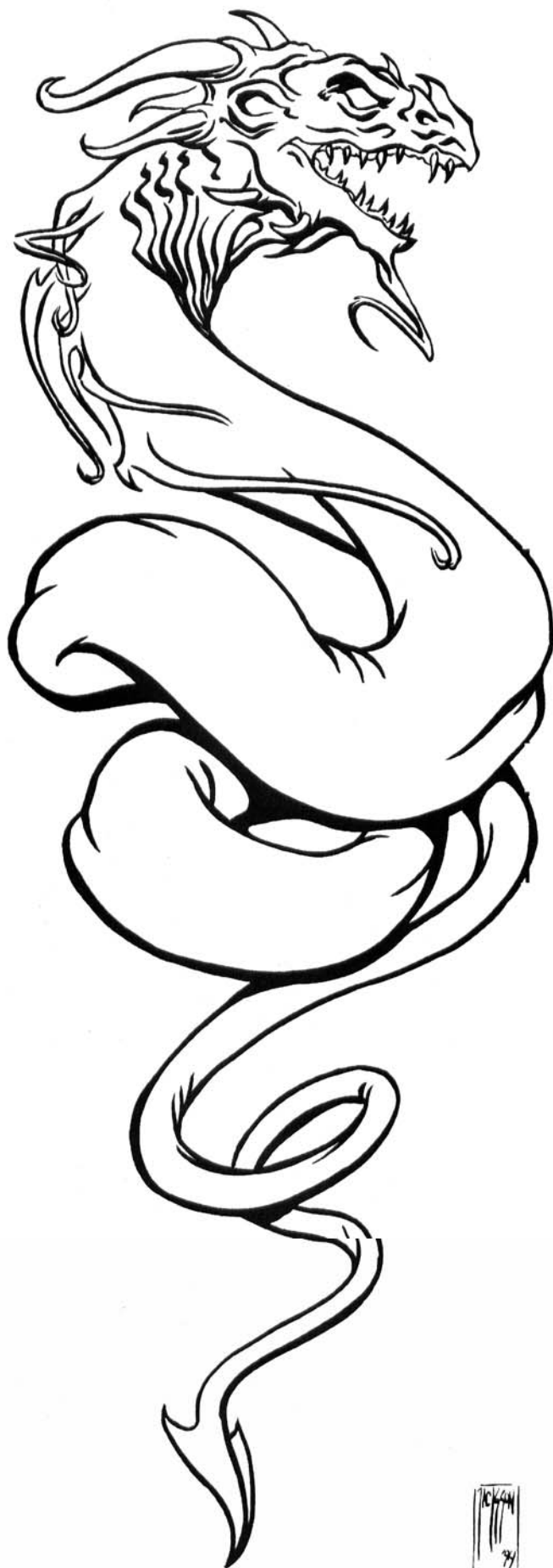
Below is a hierarchy generally agreed upon by Council of Nine mages. The Technocracy refers to such beings as "aliens" when it acknowledges them at all. Examples are provided for each category.

Greater Entities

- Gaia/God/The One
- Ialdabaoth/Satan/The Wyrn
- Uthras/Celestines

Lesser Powers

- Aeons/Incarna
- Lords
 - Totem Avatars
 - Demon Lords
 - The Court of Shadows (see below)
- Preceptors
 - Jagglings/Pack Totems
 - Court Servitors
- Minions
 - Court Servitors
 - Gafflings/Epiphlings
- Odd Spirits (who do not fit into any particular rank)
 - Elementals (Range from Incarna to Minion)
 - Naturae
 - Banes (Range from Incarna to Minion)



keeper. Again, these manifestations depend more on what the mage wants or expects to see than on some set form; thought really does shape essence in the Umbra.

More primal cosmologies refer to Aeons as Incarna. Though such entities are still essentially gods, they serve the greater powers above them (or at least seem to; this may only be the way the system appears to mortals' limited comprehension). Aeons and Incarna also assume material forms from time to time or patronize mortal servitors. The totem spirits that Garou worship grant favor to chosen tribes, visiting their charges in dreams and visions. These mighty spirits include the four elements, Urge Wyrms, and animal totems like Fenris, Lion, Pegasus and Raven.

Dominion: Ideas or concepts (each Aeon governs one), elemental forces

Titles: Aeons or Incarna

Servitors: Lords, Totems, lesser concepts, mortal avatars

Totem Avatars and Jaggings

Not to be confused with Awakened Avatars, these manifestations of Incarna visit the tribes of humans and Garou who still follow them, granting them aid and teaching them special magicks and wisdom. Though inhumanly powerful, they can be met, bargained with and, with difficulty, fought.

Hermetic scribes have ranked these beings as Umbrood Lords and Preceptors, respectively, but the spirits themselves refuse to take part in the Court of Shadows' intrigues. Instead, they concern themselves with their Incarnas' chosen. The fine distinctions between totem Incarna and totem avatars have befuddled Hermetic mages for centuries. The Dreamspeakers and Verbena insist that such classifications are a waste of time.

Demon Lords

These vile things, detailed in Chapter Four, lead the battle for intellectual corruption. Although they have material counterparts that may rival them for cosmic power, these spirits give evil a human face. Unlike the Urge Wurm Incarna they resemble, these lesser entities have distinct personalities and measurable powers. Most are ranked as Lords by the Hermetic texts; all things being equal, however, greater demons may well exist as dark gods or Maligina Incarna. Such evils cannot be faced directly, however, and are therefore missing from the demonic catalogues.

The Umbral Court

Even the Astral world is not immune to politics—indeed, the petty rules and regulations of court life are more strictly enforced in the Umbra than on Earth. The Council of Nine is well aware of the Court of Shadows, or the Umbral Court, composed of vastly powerful Lords and Preceptors in an age-old compact. Long ago, the most ancient of the Lords came together and formed the Court, to work out their differences and to cement their domains. It is thought by modern mages

to have been a "static latch" on these beings' powerful hold over the shifting Umbral world. It has since become a musty and stodgy institution, although with far more dynamism than its Earthly counterparts.

Not every being in the Umbra is a member of the Court or recognizes its right to rule. In fact, it can be considered but one of the many power groups among the Umbrood. But since it is easier to bargain with than an elemental force, it is often heeded by the Council of Nine.

The Court does not involve itself in the Ascension War. The members, for the most part, are far more concerned with their own domains, often far distant from the conflicts of Earth. When they do ally with a mage against the Technocracy, it is usually for their own reasons, rarely for the good of the universe as a whole (see Patronage, below). Some members of the Court may have been human mages once, but since many of them have held their positions of power longer than human memory, it is near impossible to say for sure. The lesser courtiers are known to be more considerate of human-level affairs, and even sympathetic to them, implying some sort of connection with humanity beyond mere interest.

Three Courts

There are said to be three different courts, related in a way, but each operating separately. These are: the Western Court, the Eastern Court and the Egyptian Court.

The members of the Western Court often resemble the intelligences and spirits mentioned in many old Hermetic texts, dating back to ancient Greece and beyond. The Order of Hermes has the most lore concerning these entities, although much of it seems outdated. The Eastern Court members sometimes resemble beings from the myths and legends of Asia, from Chinese gods to Japanese heroes; the Akashic Brotherhood seems to understand these beings best, although they prefer to avoid dealings with them. The Egyptian court is mysterious to all, even more aloof and distant from the present-day affairs of humankind than the other two. Its members often resemble the animal-headed gods of ancient Egypt.

There is rumored to also be a Lodge of the Sky, which does not recognize the rule of the other courts and considers them to be invaders into other Realms. It is said that the members of the Lodge resemble the gods and goddesses of many "primitive" religions, from pre-Columbian North America to the Polynesian Isles.

Rank and Title of the Western Lords

The Lords and Preceptors of the Western Court all follow a hierarchy of ranks and titles. These exact titles and their position on the hierarchy has changed often over the centuries. The current method resembles England's system of peerage, especially as seen in the Victorian era. This system is believed to be the whim of the more powerful Lords, playing at courtly games of make-believe. Some even posit that it is all an elaborate mockery of the Victorian era, as a snub against the Queen herself and the Technocratic order which thrived under her.



In nature, the pecking order of the food chain is what determines such social and material divisions, but in the heady world of the Astral Umbra, it is lineages and peerage (although most often meritorious rather than genetic). Unlike the natural world, if one is unfit to hold an office or role, it cannot simply be taken away by a beta throating the old alpha—laws and rules must be followed or magical disaster will follow (so the story goes...). This, the wonder and bane of civilization...

All mages agree, however, that these courtly guises are just that, guises. The true hierarchy of the court ultimately depends on power and age.

The current Western hierarchy is as follows:

- Lords: King/Queen, Duke/ Duchess, Marquess/ Marquise (sometimes Margrave/Margravin), Earl/ Countess, Viscount/ Viscountess, Baron/ Baroness
- Preceptors: Banneret, Knight/ Dame or Lady (of various Orders)
- Minions: Squire, the Professions

Mages do not have a place in this hierarchy unless they participate in the court. It is possible, through great deeds or immense knowledge, to be “raised to the peerage” by the Lords, to be given a knighthood. Many experienced mages who play the social and political games of the Court of Shadows hold knighthoods in one of the Orders, and a few very old mages have been known to be granted greater titles, but this is rare.

The Umbral Court can be fun for Storytellers and frustrating to characters. No matter who they are, no **Mage** player character can come close to these beings in age or peerage. Thus, it is a lot like visiting a real court as an outsider—you just don’t belong. You may be a treasured guest, but you will never truly belong.

This does not mean the characters should not have their victories in court; dunces reign here just as in the real world. Think of the king as portrayed in Dumas’ *Three Musketeers*. D’artagnan and the gang could never rise to true nobility, but fun was had taking part in court intrigue nonetheless.

Minions: Servitors and Gafflings

I welcome these emissaries of the Outer Regions of experience with open arms, and pray to all that commands them that they shall take me to their very limits...For my hunger is great.

—John Miskmin, “The Hunger” (Cenobium #9)

Spirits in somewhat human form, Minions (also called by a bewildering variety of names from Hestilcs to Xlenobobs) often serve higher masters but frequently pack away their own Realms and practice their own trades, hoping to rise to greater power or influence. When they manifest on Earth (a rare thing), they do so to entice humans into doing them favors or allowing them access to mortal pleasures.



Gafflings are simpler elemental beings, near-mindless servitors to Incarna, Jagglings or the mages or Garou who summon them. Guardian spirits, fetish-bound ephemeria and ghostly Drones fall into this category, as do the Pattern Spiders and idiot impulse-Banes that cater to mortal caprice and Technocratic influence. Epiphlings are manifestations of Aeon concepts (see above).

Both types of lower spirit have the intelligence of average humans at best, though they will pretend to greater cleverness than they possess. The Charms of such beings are limited, and a Paradox backlash can demolish their material forms. Nevertheless, the smarter Minions exercise a strong hold on the mortal imagination. The few Sleepers who meet such otherworldly creatures become instantly obsessed. Even mages are not immune to the lure of the unknown; Minions are often a sorcerer's first glimpse of the spirit world.

Elementals, Naturae and Banes

The following spirit types are common to the Middle Umbra. As aspects of nature, they are rarely found elsewhere unless they are summoned or bound.

The Hermetic texts do not rank these spirits, considering them to be below real consideration, only aspects of some greater thing. Deeply spiritual mages realize the short-sightedness of such conceits. Their world is alive with the shadows of corruption, order and natural mystique. Many **Werewolf** sourcebooks—**Book of the Wurm**, **Umbra**, the **Rage Across...** supplements and the **Werewolf** rulebook and **Players Guide**—go into greater detail about Middle Umbra spirits than we can do here.

Elementals: The classic pawns of Hermetic mages, elementals range from mindless bits of animated essence to godlike Umbrood Lords presiding over personal Realms. Conjuring the former requires only a simple, if powerful, rote. Negotiations with the latter should be handled with care—unless one wants to swim the Lake of Flames until crisped!

Elemental Lords have no time or patience for the games of the Astral Court. Though mages throughout history have puzzled over them, they remain as unmoved and inscrutable as the essences they personify.

Naturae: These nature-spirits of the wilds are found most often in unspoiled Glens, reflections of lands untainted by decay. Many naturae are the spirits of dead and departed animals, while others are generated from the special significance or beauty of a particular spot.

In the Mythic Age, so it is said, all rivers and trees had spirits. Now the Umbra is largely barren, and only a few such places have spirits.

Banes: Reflections of eternal corruption, Banes differ from demons in that they transcend rational concepts. Banes embody darkness on an elemental level. They do not traffic in souls or raise cults, though they will possess willing or unwary individuals and ride them to death and beyond.

These evil spirits range from idiot Gafflings to Incarna called Urge Wyrms, which embody unstoppable aspects of decay and hatred. Those who know the werewolves claim that the beast-men battle Banes without mercy. The Garou, it is said, consider mages and vampires Bane-ridden thieves and worse...

Fomori (singular *fomor*) are humans possessed by Bane corruption. They gain great power, but are marked or deformed in some way. Many fomori are mindless, deformed cannibals who lurk in the woods and near landfills. Some, however, retain their sentience and appearance and infiltrate human society. Malfean Nephandi use fomori as pawns and acolytes, and the Syndicate is rumored to have employed such unfortunates against powerful mages. As spirit-ridden beings, fomori resist Paradox though they wield unearthly powers. Unbelief, however, chips away at them and they do not live for long.

Patronage

Spirits require patrons to remain active and viable. Patrons are usually more powerful than their vassals, although some patrons may be weaker but provide a necessary service unavailable elsewhere. Such is the relationship between humans and the gods.

Many spirits of the Astral Umbra lack powerful patrons, and instead must rely on worship from humans to provide them the belief necessary to continue their own existence. Many of the rites and ceremonies associated with old pagan festivals were designed to give Quintessence from Earth to an astral spirit, in return for the spirit's aid. Without such channels of worship, a god can die. And many have perished, as the ages pass and their names are forgotten by humanity.

Most of the spirits of nature, the Naturae and the Totems, are vassals of Gaia, and thus retain a primordial connection to Prime. These spirits, long since forgotten by humanity and consigned to faerie tales and children's stories, do not need the worship of humans to survive. Their connection to the Earth Mother is enough. The same is true for Banes, who gain their livelihood from the Wurm.

This necessary connection to humans which most Astral spirits require is a boon to mages. The Order of Hermes long ago realized how to manipulate these "business" transactions to their best benefit, and continue to do so with the Court of Shadows.

Storytellers should realize that the gods need mortals, especially powerful ones such as mages. And mages can use this to gain great powers otherwise unavailable. However, this does not excuse lack of humility on the mage's part. The Astral spirits will often refuse to deal with a mage who does not display the proper deference. The gods know they need mages, and mages need the gods. But the gods demand that the game be played properly anyway.

Characters



These are the shades of Xavier's past...

— Dead Can Dance, "Xavier"

All spirits possess the Airt Sense Charm. Other Charms may be found in the Appendix.

Aeon: Abba-il-Aeon

Abba-il-Aeon is an extremely powerful spirit, on the same level as an Incarna. His spirit Traits are too high to create. However, when he is Materialized into a physical form (mostly in Umbral Realms, rarely on Earth), he has the following Traits:

Essence: Primordial

Nature/Demeanor: Unfathomable

Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 10, Stamina 10, all Social and Mental Traits 25

Abilities: Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Expression 5, Leadership 5, Melee 5

Backgrounds: N/A

Spheres: Prime 5, Spirit 5, Correspondence 5, Time 5, Mind 5, Forces 5, Life 4, Matter 4, Entropy 3

Willpower: 20

Arete: 10

Quintessence: 20

Paradox: 0

Background: Abba-il-Aeon became aware of his own existence millennia ago. He had existed millennia before that, but

lacked the degree of self-consciousness that later allowed him to be aware of his separateness, his ego. ("He" is just a pronoun used for convenience; Aeons rarely have actual sexual gender.) Since that time he has built many works, forging *Sh'kinas* (realms of light) within the Umbra from which his servitors involve themselves in the doings of humanity. Abba-il-Aeon's ultimate goal is the reunification of himself with the rest of the universe; in other words, to unite the Pure Ones and their many shards.

Image: His actual being is too bright to be seen without forever burning out one's eyes, so he often garbs himself in the image of a king, with flowing robes and stately sword.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a high-unfathomable being, representing a level of consciousness and enlightenment unimaginable to most humans. Every utterance should be a paradox of some sort, although a thread of reasoning lies within, usually dealing with justice or morality and the problem of evolving a soul.

Umbrood Lord: Lady Beloia

Willpower: 9, **Rage:** 7, **Gnosis:** 12, **Power:** 75

Charms: All but Bane Charms

When Materialized, she has the following Traits. It costs her 23 Power points to Materialize.

Dominion: Curiosity

Essence: Questing

Nature/Demeanor: Varies

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, (Use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 4, Melee 3

Backgrounds: N/A

Spheres: Prime 4, Spirit 5, Correspondence 4, Time 3, Mind 3, Forces 3, Life 3, Matter 2, Entropy 1

Willpower: 9

Arete: 9

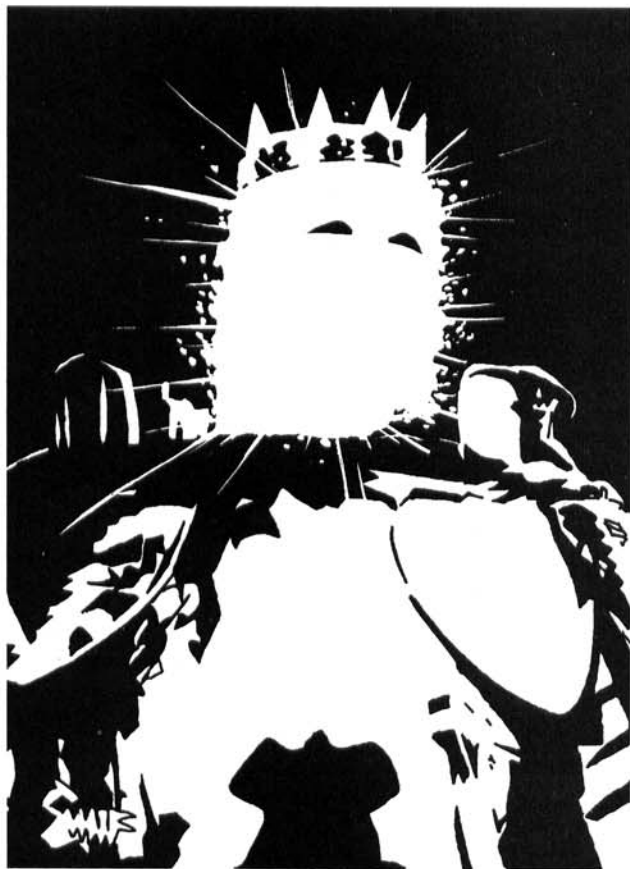
Quintessence: 15

Paradox: 0

Background: Beloia is a servitor of Abba-il-Aeon. Some believe she is Abba-il-Aeon's curiosity itself given form and consciousness, roving about the universe seeking experience and understanding. Her goals are that of her Lord, to reunite the Pure Ones, a goal which Ialdabaoth thwarts.

Image: Beloia appears as a lady knight, girt in shining mail with an ever-billowing cloak about her shoulders. This, of course, is not her true form, which actually resembles a cloud of multi-colored and brilliant gasses.

Roleplaying Notes: You are driven by an urge to know the world and understand it better. For this reason, you will eagerly interact with humans and other life forms that approach you, hoping to gain another piece in the cosmic puzzle of enlightenment. However, you are the sworn enemy of Ialdabaoth's minions, and will war with them whenever the chance arises. You will not hesitate to enlist others into your fight, even against their will.





Preceptor: Baron Vluxon

Willpower 8, Rage 10, Gnosis 7, Power 55

Charms: Create Object, Materialize, Solidify Reality

When Materialized, he has the following Traits. It costs him 31 Power points to Materialize.

Dominion: Borders

Essence: Dynamic

Nature/Demeanor: Bravo/Traditionalist

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, (Use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Intimidation 5, Melee 5

Backgrounds: N/A

Spheres: Prime 2, Spirit 3, Correspondence 1, Time 1, Mind 2, Forces 3, Life 4, Matter 4, Entropy 5

Willpower: 8

Arete: 6

Quintessence: 12

Paradox: 0

Background: Baron Vluxon has been set with the duty of keeping the Borders. That is, he is in charge of repelling any hostile force which crosses the Horizon. The force must be hostile to the Court of Shadows. Forces which are hostile to humankind, but neutral to the Court, are allowed to pass with no trouble. He has a

mighty fortress with windows looking out upon every section of the border between the Horizon and the Astral World's Near Umbra. His soldiers watch out these windows, wary for incoming enemies. However, over the ages, the Baron's soldiers have diminished in number, and not every window is always watched. Thus, enemies still slink across the border.

If an enemy is detected, the Baron is alerted, whereupon he blows a monstrous horn which hangs from the rafters of his great hall. The bass rumble of this horn can be heard in every domain of the Court, and certain Court members are expected to muster at that time and march upon the invading force. The horn has not been blown in many years.

Image: The Baron is a portly man, huge and boisterous. He always wears a breastplate of armor, but is otherwise clad in court finery. When girding for battle, he bears a huge war hammer.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a happy soul. Although you have been left to rot on the border, far from Court, this bothers you not a whit, for your hall is full of the booty your soldiers have bought back from secret raids across the Horizon. These raids break the rulings of the Court, however, so you'll do your best to keep them secret.



Jaggling: Lune

Willpower 8, Rage 4 (8 during the full moon), Gnosis 7, Power 35

Charms: Open Moon Bridge (Cost 5; creates a co-locality effect, uniting two locations by a glowing tunnel), Reform

Lunes are Jagglings of Luna, the moon Incarna. They appear as shimmering ribbons of light surrounded by auras of gold and blue. They communicate empathically, undulating into various forms as they silently commune with another spirit. This motion becomes increasingly unstable as the moon waxes. The demeanors of Lunes change dramatically depending on the phase of the Moon. Like their mistress, they are susceptible to lunar madness during the full moon.

Lunes sometimes act as guides to friendly mages, especially Primordial Verbenas. However, should the Lune be suffering from madness, there is no guarantee the spirit will lead the traveler where she wishes to go.

Minions: Hestilcs

Willpower 8, Rage 10, Gnosis 7, Power 55

Charms: Empathize (as Mind 2 Pathos), Healing, Materialize, Shapeshift

When Materialized, Hestilcs have the following Traits. It costs them 22 points to Materialize.

Essence: Questing

Nature/Demeanor: Deviant/Bon Vivant

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, (Use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits)

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5, Melee 2, Seduction 5, Torture 5

Backgrounds: N/A

Background: From an Astral Realm of sensual excess (fed, some say, by the Cultists of Ecstasy), the Hestilcs guide willing subjects into pleasures and torments that the most crazed inquisitors and sybarites could only dream of. Naturally, the traffic to their door has been pretty heavy in these desperate days, when everything, even excess, seems blasé. The pleasures they offer—mind-bending highs and endless orgasmic union—overlap with exquisite sadism (healed by magick)—boilings, rippings, piercings, brandings and short-lived mutilations—as the spirits change shape to suit the mood.

It is said that Cultists who Ascend join the Hestilcs, but most Ecstasy mages deny it. The Nephandi may be behind the spirits' odd Realm, but visitors who have returned none the worse for wear claim that the experience is purely consensual and ends the moment the "victim" desires it to. Skeptics point out that this only reinforces the corruption. The truth remains hidden. Nevertheless, the emissary to the Court of Shadows, a gorgeous hermaphrodite called Khemm, has gathered a lot of power and favor. Perhaps the gods themselves need diversions...

Image: The Bringers of Ecstasy mirror the desires of their subjects, from sexual epitomes to gruesome terrors. Favored forms vary with the mortal culture that a particular Hestilc

adores. These spirits are known for their fondness and imitation of human fashions and whim and often wander the Earth in search of new styles or trends to cannibalize.

Roleplaying Notes: You worship the endless well of sensation that humanity provides. Their sensations—which you share—are limited only by your imagination. Your craft varies from the subtle to the cheap, but you'll use whatever works to give your subjects—and yourself—a new thrill.

Elementals

These spirits are the manifestations of the elements, the building blocks of Gaia and all life. In recent years, the classical concept of the four elements of air, fire, earth and water has been replaced by the discovery of a multitude of different elementals. Indeed, in the urban domains, spirits of glass, metal and plastic have been contacted by clever mages. The power level of elementals ranges; some are no more than Gafflings, while others are as powerful as any Incarna. The following are examples of minor elementals that might be contacted or summoned.

Air Elemental

Willpower 3, Rage 8, Gnosis 7, Power 40

Charms: Create Wind, Reform, Updraft

Earth Elemental

Willpower 10, Rage 4, Gnosis 5, Power 40

Charms: Armor, Materialize, Umbraquake

Fire Elemental

Willpower 5, Rage 10, Gnosis 5, Power 30

Charms: Blast Flame, Create Fires

Water Elemental

Willpower 6, Rage 4, Gnosis 10, Power 30

Charms: Cleanse the Blight, Flood, Healing

Electricity Elemental

Willpower 6, Rage 7, Gnosis 5, Power 40

Charms: Control Electrical Systems, Lightning Bolts, Short Out

Glass Elemental

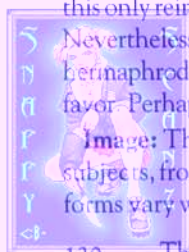
Willpower 4, Rage 7, Gnosis 7, Power 45

Charms: Materialize, Shatter Glass, Throw Glass

Gafflings

Animal Spirits

Animal spirits are similar to their physical counterparts, but they usually have some special mythic power. The sheer variety of animal spirits prevents categorization. Primal spiritualists believe that all Jaggling and Gaffling animal spirits are allied to their patron Totem Incarna, called "animal fathers" in old lore. These animal fathers are said to live in lodges somewhere in the Near Umbra.



Below are some sample animal spirit Gafflings:

- Snake

Willpower 5, Rage 6, Gnosis 8, Power 20

Charms: Paralyzing Stare (Cost 1; as a Prime 2 rote

Rubbing the Bones. Four die "Arete.")

- Owl

Willpower 7, Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Power 20

Charms: Materialize

- Falcon

Willpower 10, Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Power 25

Charms: Awe (Cost 1; as the Mind 2 Empathy Effect.)

Glade Child

Glade Children are tree spirits, the true souls of trees. They maintain the physical form of the tree, but in the Umbra they can be seen as luminescent figures draped in robes, asleep within the tree. Their kind and wise faces keep a careful vigil over their surroundings, and their green eyes watch all who pass by.

The spiritual form of a Glade Child depends primarily on the physical location of its tree. In the wild, the spirit appears magnificent and majestic; in an urban area, it would appear dusty and sick. Glade Children are usually Gafflings or Jagglings, although some extremely old or powerful ones may be Incarna (these are usually associated with ancient trees and are called Oak Kings).

Willpower 7, Rage 3, Gnosis 8, Power: variable (20 for a sapling, 80+ for an ancient redwood)

Charms: Cleanse the Blight, Forest Sense

Gafflings: Weaver Spirits

Weaver spirits are the myriad spawn of the Weaver, a Celestine of cosmic stasis. Most Weaver spirits appears as spiders or strange geometric patterns, and all have the Charm: Solidify Reality.

Pattern Spider

Pattern Spiders are the most common and numerous servants of stasis. Spirit-smart Technomancers often utilize these creatures. Though primarily workers, Pattern Spiders can also attack those who disturb them, calcifying them into a static web for all eternity.

Willpower 6, Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Power 25

Charms: Calcify, Solidify Reality

Net-Spider

Net-Spiders inhabit the Digital Web, a half-material half-spirit Realm unto itself. These spirits can discover details about any and all data held on-line. Net-Spiders can travel only along phone lines or computer cables and can be blocked by security programming (which is itself often a Net-Spider).

Net-Spiders are used by savvy Virtual Adepts and other hacker mages to recover information about institutions and corporations. They appear as small spiders floating atop strange fractal patterns of energy and are exceedingly useful in pirating data. All Net-Spider actions are half difficulty and cost when they relate to electronics and computers.

Willpower 8, Rage 4, Gnosis 9, Power 40

Charms: Reform, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static

Banes

Calibarra

The Wyrms Urge of Gluttony drives this minor Bane to possess a host and compel it to gorge itself to death. When the Bane encounters a likely prospect (after an Umbral search), it will insinuate an overwhelming hunger into its "host" by rolling its Rage against the target's Willpower. If the person succumbs, he or she begins to eat voraciously, taking one Health Level per hour (one hour per Bane success) unless drugged or restrained.

A related Bane, the Goobarri, infects its victims with an insatiable desire to win at games of skill or chance. A mortal under this Bane's influence will game compulsively for one day per success, throwing away money, time and devotion to any and all tasks and responsibilities.

Willpower 3, Rage 5, Gnosis 4, Power 15

Charms: Compel (cost 3), Reform

Tempestoro

A violent and horribly destructive Bane, the Tempestoro manifests in low Gauntlet areas or places where it has been brought through to unleash its chaos. When it materializes, it tears into whatever materials are present with its Charms, starting with the most fragile and working its way up from there. Mages wishing to bind elementals sometimes get stuck with Tempestoros sent their way by disgruntled Elemental Lords.

Tempestoro are stone stupid and appear as massive buffalo. Their essence shifts with whatever attack they are using—from fire to water to foggy clouds, glass, or whatever—but retain a basic bull-like shape. They destroy everything around until banished, but prefer material objects to living beings. When incarnate, Tempestoro remain hard to hit with physical attacks (difficulty 8), though they have no Attributes to speak of.

Willpower 4, Rage 7, Gnosis 4, Power 50

Materialized Health Levels: 14

Charms: Blast Flame (5 dice), Control Electrical Systems (3 points), Create Fires (3 points), Create Wind (10 points), Flood (5 points), Frozen Breath (5 dice), Lightning Bolts (5 dice), Materialize (8 points), Shatter Glass, Throw Glass



Appendix: Systems

*Verily, creation is an eternal dance,
Each spin and whirligig a study
Of graceful pause, purpose
And ever-wond'ring change!*
— Hapsburg, Orphan Seer

New Spirit Rules



With this **Book of Madness**, we have changed the game mechanics for spirits to reflect the rules given in **Werewolf Second Edition**, both for clarity and crossover purposes. The new rules below give the spirit world a feel of its own, distinguishing it from the mundane world of matter.

Visitation

Mages can pass into the spirit world by either using rank 3 or 4 Spirit magick (in which case they step through the Gauntlet) or through the rank 5 Mind Effect **Untether Effect** (which sends the mind into the Astral Umbra alone). Those who physically enter the Umbrae may use any magick or take any action they may desire (if they can;

see below). Astral travelers, however, are limited to mental tasks and actions. Any magick used this way must function through a mental bond. For more details, see the **Mage** rulebook under Mind 5.

Umbral Combat

When a mage enters the Umbra, “stepping sideways” or opening a Gauntlet gate, she passes into a world where the usual laws of reality do not apply. The following features are worth noting:

- Paradox, though it exists, is reduced — a mage need do nothing to conceal her magickal inheritance. All magick is considered coincidental, no matter what form it takes. The mage rolls her full Arete for Effects, not simply the upper limit imposed by static reality.

- The world appears more as a representation of what it is than what it *seems to be* when seen by material eyes. The High Umbral state resembles a vivid high-resolution image of the real world; static reality looks foggy by comparison. The Middle Umbra captures the sensual elemental force that lingers past mortal flux. The Dark Umbra, to those who pass on and return, mirrors the decay of everything that seems most vital in the other two worlds. All three places are very *other*; Spirit travelers enter a whole new realm.

- Material beings cannot physically harm spirits unless those Umbrood have Materialized (see below). Werewolves, for some reason, sidestep this rule, as can mages who exceed the third rank in Spirit magick. Other humans find their hands or weapons passing through the ephemera. Talismans and magick, however, affect spirit matter, and do so normally.

- All attack difficulties increase by one in the Umbra.
- Attacks which go against an opponent's Attribute (for example, a spirit Dodging to avoid an incoming Force bolt) are figured against their Willpower. To Dodge, the spirit above would roll its Willpower against the mage's successes instead of Dexterity + Dodge.

Spirit Combat

Spirits do not physically attack; instead, they use Willpower and Rage against difficulty 6. An attacking spirit, therefore, would roll its Willpower to hit a character and roll its Rage to damage her if it hit — the Umbrood is taking out its anger on the intruder, not physically assaulting her. Each successful Rage attack inflicts one aggravated Health Level of damage. A mage can soak this with either Spirit countermagick, difficulty 6 (only Spirit; no other Sphere will work) or by rolling her Arete against difficulty 8. Each success reduces the spirit's damage by one Health Level. Spirits who fight each other reduce each other's Power instead of Health.

Spirits cannot soak damage; only those with the Armor Charm can do that. Although a Materialized spirit can take aggravated damage on Earth, there's no difference between the damage types in the Umbra. Damage is damage. Ephemeral beings reduced below 0 Power dissipate, sometimes to Reform later, sometimes to die away completely...

Materialized spirits attack, soak or defend using their Materialized Attributes, although their Gnosis still stands in for Social and Mental Traits. Those beings reduced below 0 Health return to their Umbral state for a while.

Pursuit

A fleeing spirit rolls its Willpower against difficulty 6 to get away. It begins with an automatic three successes because it's on home ground. A mage who has stepped sideways rolls her Dexterity + Athletics to follow; if she has gone in through Mind magick (see below), she rolls her own Willpower. Her own difficulty for either roll is 8 as she is *not* on home ground. A spirit who gets more than 10 successes gets away clean. The Reform Charm allows an Umbrood to do this without rolling, which gets really annoying to visiting mages!

Spirit Traits

Spirits differ from physical beings in many ways. Instead of physical Attributes and Abilities, spirits have the following Traits: Willpower, Rage, Gnosis, Power and Charms. How they use these Traits is detailed below.

Willpower

Willpower allows a spirit to take "physical" actions: attacking an enemy, racing after another spirit or even flying through the Umbra. Contests of this nature between spirits are resolved by opposed Willpower rolls.

Difficulty Action

3	easy action
5	fairly simple action
6	normal action
8	difficult action
10	virtually impossible action

Rage

Rage is a spirit's anger and anguish. Spirits can destroy and harm other spirits or material beings with their Rage. For each success on a Rage roll, one Health Level of damage is inflicted, or one point of Power is lost if the target is a spirit.

Gnosis

Gnosis is what a spirit uses for any sort of Social or Mental roll or any roll to transform the parameters of a situation. For instance, a riddle contest with a spirit could be resolved using the questioner's Wits + Enigmas resisted by the spirit's Gnosis; whoever scores the most successes wins. Likewise, a spirit would roll its Gnosis when trying to intimidate, scare or fool a target. This applies in or out of the Umbra; Social Abilities add to the Umbrood's Gnosis (i.e. Gnosis + Intimidation) if they apply.

Power

Unlike Garou, spirits rarely use their own Gnosis in attacks. Instead, they use "batteries" of mystical energy, which they harness from the Umbra to sustain themselves. A spirit's "battery" is known as its Power, and it is depleted through special abilities and damage. When a spirit's Power reaches zero, the spirit dissipates into the Umbra for a number of hours equal to 20 minus its Gnosis, after which it Reforms with one Power point. Optionally, a mage who knows the Spirit 4 rote **Create Fetish** can bind the Umbrood into a fetish. However, the fetish will not be usable until the spirit's Power is recharged (see below). Needless to say, this is a good way to make lots of spirits very angry.

Recharging Power

When a spirit is low on Power, it begins to look translucent, as if it is not fully there. If the spirit has lost its Power because of combat damage, it will look ragged and torn.



Spirits can replenish their Power by entering a completely inactive state called Slumber. During this time the Umbrood finds a secluded spot in the Umbra and floats there in a deep sleep. For each hour that the spirit does nothing whatsoever, it regains one Power point. Many spirit mages argue about whether or not spirits dream during this time.

When a spirit is in Slumber, it may easily be bound with Spirit magick, regardless of its current Power level or willingness. When a spirit is bound into a fetish, it automatically enters Slumber and stays in that state until released; the fetish's powers are activated by the user, not the spirit. A newly created fetish will not work until the spirit has regained its full Power (which can take a long time for the more powerful spirits).

Movement

All spirits can fly (and float) in the Umbra. The maximum distance (in yards) they can move in a turn is 20 + Willpower.

The Umbra does not always have a strict geographical equivalent to the physical world; sometimes yards and feet just don't add up in the spirit world. The Storyteller is free to warp distances as she pleases when running stories in the Umbra. However, the Penumbra (the zone directly surrounding physical reality) does maintain distances analogous to the physical world (one yard always equals one yard).

Communication

The Umbrood speak a different tongue than physical beings. Spirit communication is not so much a language as a form of telepathy, a comprehension by both parties of the other's voiced intent. Not everyone can understand spirits. The Spirit 2 **Call Spirits** Effect is required to speak with and understand spirits unless those entities also speak human tongues.

Charms

Each spirit possesses special powers, known as Charms. These magicks generally require a certain amount of Power to employ. Unless otherwise stated, a Charm lasts for one scene. Combat-oriented Charms, however, last one turn per use. These Umbrood powers do not invoke Paradox.

Charms

Common Charms

Airt Sense: Most spirits have a natural sense of the airts (directions) of the spirit world and are able to travel about without much difficulty. It costs one Power to find any particular thing.

• **Armor:** This Charm provides a spirit one soak die per Power point spent. This is the only way a spirit can soak damage unless it is Materialized. The spirit may use this Charm at any time in the combat turn before damage is rolled.

• **Healing:** This allows a spirit to heal physical beings (like mages) or even their own Materialized forms. The spirit spends one Power point per Health Level or three per Health Level if the damage is aggravated.

• **Materialize:** A spirit with this Charm may materialize and affect the physical world. To do so, the spirit's Gnosis must equal or exceed the Gauntlet for that area. When an Umbrood Materializes, it must spend Power to create a physical shape and give itself bodily Traits. However, a spirit still rolls its Gnosis for Social or Mental activities. The Power point costs are as follows:

Power Cost Trait

- 1 Per one Physical Attribute level
- 1 Per two Ability levels
- 1 7 Health Levels (as a mortal)
- 1 Per additional Health Level (each extra Health Level also increases size)
- 1 Per one Health Level healed (regenerate damage to the physical form), per three if the damage was inflicted by Paradox backlash or Spirit magick.

1 **Weaponry:** Per die of aggravated damage done in addition to Strength (Bite is one die, Claws are two, etc.)

Umbrood have no limits on their Attribute and Ability levels. It is possible for them to form extremely strong or fast bodies if they spend enough Power. Most, however, have a "prime form" which they default to when Materializing.

Example: a Bane spirit wants to Materialize into the physical world, the better to terrorize mortals. It wants the following characteristics: Str 3, Dex 4, Sta 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Stealth 3, and seven Health Levels. This costs it 16 Power points.

A spirit may stay Materialized as long as it desires, but it cannot enter an area with a higher Gauntlet than its Gnosis. While Materialized, the spirit may not recharge its Power unless it has a Charm that allows it to do so. When a Materialized spirit is attacked, damage is applied to its Health Levels. If a spirit is reduced to zero Health Levels, it dissipates into the Umbra and may not reuse this Charm for (20 hours minus its Gnosis).

Note that aggravated damage suffered by a spirit is applied to Health Levels *and* Power. Thus, a spirit cannot always escape its sojourn on Earth unscathed.

Reform: This Charm allows a spirit to dissipate and Reform somewhere else in the Umbra, usually far away from its enemies; this costs 20 Power.

Specialty Charms

• **Appear:** With this Charm, a spirit can manifest to an Earthly observer without taking on material form. It cannot, however, affect the material world in any way while using this Charm. A specialty of demons, who use it to taunt their victims. Costs five Power.

• **Blast Flame:** The spirit can blast a gout of flame at opponents. The Power cost is two per die of damage.

• **Break Reality:** The spirit can disrupt the reality of a substance, and thereby modify its Umbral form, by making a Gnosis roll. For example, the spirit could, with a successful enough roll, create a door in a wall, enabling the spirit to pass through. The difficulty is determined by the extent of the attempted change and how interesting, sensible and clever the action is. The number of successes obtained determines how much change is actually accomplished. A botch on this roll is extremely harmful and causes the spirit to lose a Gnosis point. The Power cost ranges from two to 10 points (again, depending on the extent of the change).

• **Calcify:** This Charm is possessed only by Pattern Spiders or some Paradox Spirits. It allows the spirit to bind a target into the Pattern Web. A Willpower roll is made against the target's own Willpower. Each success subtracts one from the victim's Physical Attributes (or Willpower, in the case of spirits). When Attributes or Willpower are reduced to zero, the victim is bound fast into the Pattern Web until freed (rescuers must score a number of damage successes with attack rolls equal to the successes of the Weaver spirit). The Power cost is two.

• **Cleanse the Blight:** This Charm purges spiritual corruption in the vicinity. Power cost is 10.

• **Control Electrical Systems:** The spirit can exert control over an electrical system. The spirit rolls its Gnosis (difficulty from 3 to 9 depending on the system's complexity). Power cost is from one to five points.

• **Create Fires:** By succeeding with a Gnosis roll, the spirit can create small fires. The difficulty varies (from 3 for small fires to 9 for conflagrations). The Power cost varies from one to five points.

• **Create Wind:** The spirit can create wind effects. Power cost varies — from one for a breeze to 20 for a tornado.

• **Disorient:** Possessed only by Wyld spirits and some demons. The spirit may completely alter landmarks and directions with a successful Gnosis roll (difficulty 6 or the Gauntlet rating, whichever is higher). The Power cost is two.

• **Flood:** The spirit can cause all the waters in a given area to rise rapidly, causing flooding. The Power cost is five per one-mile radius.

• **Forest Sense:** The spirit can sense all that transpires in its earthly, wooded domain. Power cost is 10.

• **Freeze:** The spirit can drastically lower the temperature in the immediate area. The cost is three Power points for every 10-yard radius, and three additional Power points per die of damage; anyone in the area suffers this damage. The first three points spent reduce the temperature in the area to freezing; each additional three-point increment reduces the temperature by an additional 10 degrees Fahrenheit.

• **Frozen Breath:** The spirit exhales a breath of bitter cold air. The cost is one Power point per die of damage.

• **Ice Shards:** The spirit can fling sharp shards of ice at a target. The cost is five Power points per three dice damage.

• **Influence:** This allows an Umbrood to change the target's mood like the *Subliminal Impulse* Mind rote. The Umbrood need not speak to its target to use this Charm, and the effects are more gradual than sudden. Each die of effect costs 3 Power.

• **Lightning Bolts:** The spirit can generate lightning bolts and target them at opponents. The Power cost is two per die of damage inflicted.

• **Mind Speech:** A spirit with this Charm can speak directly into a subject's mind, like the Mind 3 *Telepathy* rote. Cost is three points per die.

• **Open Moon Bridge:** Creates a mystick Moon Bridge from one location to another; there does not have to be a Node present. The total distance is 1000 miles. Power cost is five.

• **Shapeshift:** The spirit may take the form of anything it desires. It does not gain the powers or abilities of its new shape, only the form and visage. The Power cost is five.

• **Shatter Glass:** The spirit can cause all glass in the vicinity to break (Gnosis; difficulty 6). The Power cost is three.

• **Short Out:** The spirit can cause electrical systems to short out (Gnosis; difficulty 6). The Power cost is three.

• **Solidify Reality:** This Charm is possessed only by Technomancer-allied spirits. It enables that spirit to spin the Pattern Web, thus reinforcing the laws and rules of static reality upon the Umbra. This power requires only a Willpower roll. The spirit could, with a successful enough roll, make a spiritual wall so solid that it could not be bypassed. The difficulty is determined by the extent of the solidification and how interesting, sensible and clever the description of the action is. The number of successes obtained determines how much solidifying is allowed. Power cost ranges from one to 20, depending on the magnitude of the feat.

Success makes the object or spirit more solid. An object's effective "Health Levels" are increased by one per success. The effect lasts for about a day. Each spirit can make only one roll for each object.

• **Spirit Static:** This allows a spirit to raise the Gauntlet in a given area by one. The Power cost is 10.

• **Spirit Away:** The dreaded power of the worst Paradox spirits and demons. With this Charm, a human may be snatched from the material world and taken straight to an Umbral Realm. If the Umbrood scores four or more successes with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7), the mortal passes through the Gauntlet and into the spirit's personal Realm. He does not pass "Go," does not collect \$200 and goes directly to Hell (or wherever). He may then try to escape — if he can... This costs 25 Power and takes the spirit along with its target.

• **Throw Glass:** The spirit can direct shards of glass at intruders. Three dice of damage can be inflicted. The Power cost is five.

• **Tracking:** The spirit can unerringly track its prey. Power cost is five.

- **Umbraquake:** The spirit can cause the Umbra to shake with such force that all those standing are thrown to the ground. Everyone within the radius suffers damage from the spiritual concussion. The cost is five Power per 10-foot radius and two Power per die of aggravated damage.

- **Updraft:** The spirit can lift a human-sized creature into the air. Power cost is three.

Bane and Demon Charms

- **Animate:** Allows a demon to take over a dead body and send it against the living. A zombie thus animated has Physical Attributes of 3 each, 7 no-penalty Health Levels and a Brawl of 3, but no other Attributes. This only works with one corpse at a time. Nasty demons may use any Social Abilities or Gnosis they have through the host body to intimidate, harass, seduce or traumatize living victims. Costs 10 Power points (and is worth it!).

- **Blighted Touch:** The spirit can bring out the worst in a target. If the spirit successfully attacks, the target must immediately make a Willpower roll. If she fails, her negative characteristics dominate her personality for the next few hours. A botch on the Willpower roll causes this "personality disorder" to become permanent. The Power cost is two.

- **Corruption:** The spirit can whisper an evil suggestion in a target's ear; the target is inclined to act upon that thought. The Power cost is one.

- **Possession:** The demon or Bane may possess a living being or inanimate object. Possession requires a successful Gnosis roll (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). The number of successes equals the speed with which possession occurs; refer to the chart below:

Successes Time Taken

1	six hours
2	three hours
3	one hour
4	15 minutes
5	five minutes
6+	instantaneous

During the time it takes to possess its victim, the spirit will find a dark, isolated part of the Umbra and remain there, concentrating on the possession. During this time, the spirit can take no other action. If it engages in spirit combat, the possessive link is broken. Possessing spirits are often guarded by others of their kind to ensure that the possession process remains undisturbed.

A spirit that has possessed a victim is able to manifest certain characteristics and abilities through the vessel of the victim's body. Such hapless humans are known as fomori (see Chapter Five). More details on demonic possession can be found in Chapter Four.

Ritualis Infernal: the Art of Dark Sorcery



Vain wisdom all, and false prophesy.

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Dark Sorcery, also known as Ritualis Infernal and Dark Thaumaturgy, is a new form of magical power for **Mage**. Storytellers are strongly advised not to allow the players' characters to possess this "art;" it is intended to be used only by truly evil beings. Dark Sorcery is a form of Hedge Magic which taps the ambient energies of Hell rather than those of the Diabolist. The art is totally based upon ritual forms and must be performed accordingly.

Ritualis Infernal do not evoke Paradox, but must be performed successfully in order to function. Some rituals take an entire scene to perform, and potent ones may take hours or even days. Many require extended rolls—usually of 5 to 10 successes to pull off the Effects. Botching a ritual almost always has catastrophic effects. Mages, because of their innate dynamism, cannot use such static *magic* (as opposed to *magick*); it is no longer in their nature. True Magick Ritual is detailed below.

Special categories of ritualism are called Paths; each deals specifically with one type of magic. Dark Sorcery rituals do not come cheaply or freely. These powers, released as they are by demonic means, require pacts and servitude to purchase.

The Paths detailed below include the Fires of Inferno, the Path of Summoning, and the Path of Lust and Torment. Many others exist, and may be created by the Storyteller based upon the Paths given here. Vampiric infernalists are said to know many dark secrets, but their magics are supposedly based upon their immortal blood. Mortals practice a different sort of magic.

The Paths

I'm coming back I will return

And I'll possess your body and I'll make you burn

I have the fire, I have the force

I have the power to make my evil take its course

— Iron Maiden, "The Number of the Beast"

Fires of Inferno

This Path allows the Diabolist to conjure and control a substance known as Hellfire. The energy looks very much like fire except that it appears in a variety of colors, and it affects those with protection from normal flames. There are no rituals connected with this Path; one either knows it or does not.



Creating Hellfire requires at least one success against difficulty 6. Throwing it at someone raises the difficulty to 8.

The Path level indicates how much damage the Hellfire inflicts when first conjured; the higher the level of the practitioner, the hotter the flames. Hellfire causes aggravated wounds and burns for half damage (round down) every turn after the first until extinguished. Hellfire can be put out in the same way as normal flames.

- One die of damage
- Two dice of damage
- Three dice of damage
- Four dice of damage
- Five dice of damage

The Path of Summoning

The most dangerous sort of black magic. Summoning rituals draw forth creatures—usually demons—from some hell. The creature appears through the power of the ritual itself. The being is free to do as it pleases once it appears, so it is best to plan a way of controlling or manipulating it into doing what it is brought forth to do. All summonings require Charisma + Path rating rolls (difficulty set by the Storyteller, usually 9) and extended rolls of 8 successes or more. Each type of Umbrood or specific individual requires a separate ritual. Using the wrong ritual to summon someone could lead to disaster.

Each level of this Path offers rituals for some important phase of summoning. First, a warlock must learn to call his subject. From there, he learns to bring a minor spirit into the world. After that, he learns to summon servitor demons (level 3) and tempters (level 4 and 5). Higher levels of summoning can supposedly conjure demon lords, but such rituals are hard to come by. Bindings, protection and dismissal for these entities are almost nonexistent.

Bindings, Dismissals and Protections

Each level has rituals which allow the infernalist to bind or dismiss that level of demon or to protect himself from the demon when it comes. These rituals are harder to acquire than the summonings themselves; demons do not want to give away trade secrets! A mortal who wants to summon a servitor demon needs not one ritual but four third level rituals (a summoning, a binding, a dismissal and a protection) to do it right. Most infernalists do not take all the precautions they should...

- Binding rituals allow a diabolist to force a demon into servitude. The ritual may take on whatever form the Storyteller wants. It can involve knowledge of the creature's True Name, promising one's soul in payment, a list that names the creature's price for service or any number of other things. Binding rituals, as with all rituals, should differ with each entity. Bindings require a Manipulation + Path roll (difficulty set by the Storyteller, usually 8).

- Dismissal rituals let a practitioner of the black arts force a creature back from whence it came. Some of these rituals also carry with them a specific length of time during

which the creature will be unable to return to Earth. Dismissal requires an Intelligence + Path roll (difficulty set by the Storyteller, usually 9).

- Signs of Protection are special symbols, glyphs and markings that protect the user from a specific type of creature. There are many Signs of Protection, ranging from small, hand-held symbols to large magic circles. Signs of Protection require a Wits + Path roll (difficulty set by the Storyteller, usually 7).

Path Levels

- **Calling:** The beginning warlock learns how to call and entreat otherworldly beings (see **Call Spirits**). The various rituals at this level allow her to contact spirit entities, though she will have no power over them. Demons use this as a sort of early warning-cum-dinner bell for future reference.

- **Spirit Summoning:** Rituals at this level allow warlocks to conjure minor spirits (Gafflings, minor elementals or low-powered Minions; see Chapter Five), but not demons. Such rituals require five or more successes on extended Charisma + Path rolls, difficulty 8. Other rituals let the summoner bind, dismiss or block these spirits. One ritual is required per type, i.e., an animal spirit ritual, a fire elemental ritual, a Hestilc ritual, etc.

- **Minor Summoning:** The summoners may now summon, bind, dismiss or block servitor-rank demons (Chapter Four) or more powerful Minions. As with all levels of this Path, separate rituals must be found or granted for each type of being and each aspect of the summoning. Most of these rites involve some kind of blood sacrifice and require ten or more successes, difficulty 9.

- **Prime Summoning:** Low-level tempters (like Vugarius) can now be summoned if the warlock is brave enough. These beings are damned powerful and have individual names; the correct name must be used for a summoning to be effective. Some demons grant these rituals to allow favored pawns to contact them, but never give the correct bindings or dismissals. Others offer rites to bind their rivals, using their mortal dupes to fight their battles and take the heat.

- **Great Summoning:** At this Path rank, the greatest of tempters (like Jadrax) can be called upon or conjured for short periods of time. The warlock attempting such a summoning ought to be really sure of herself...

The Path of Lust and Torment

This Path has been used to corrupt a many a soul. The pleasures of these rites bring mortals to ecstatic heights that they never want to leave, while the tortures skilled warlocks can perform outpace the Inquisition's darkest moments. Both types of stimulation are entirely spiritual. No mark or injury testifies to whatever joys or torments the subject endured. Many warlocks alternate the two sensations, especially within their cults. The heady feelings can generate deep dependence mixed with fear among subjects of the rites.

Hedge Magic

This mortal form of magic lacks the fluidity of True Magick; nevertheless, it has its advantages. As it does not warp reality by sudden force of will, Hedge Magic does not incur Paradox. Though its effects are subtle, limited and time-consuming, such magic harnesses a small part of the slumbering Avatar that all beings possess. Despite this, hedge wizards cannot burn Quintessence to lower their difficulties. That falls into the dominion of True Magick.

Dark Sorcery is a form of Hedge Magic that draws its energy from an evil limited Awakening (see Chapter Four). Warlocks who practice this power do not need to study or train themselves to learn these "levels" of craft. They need only sell their souls or go deeply into infernal debt.

Each Path represents a form of magical expertise. Rituals may be bought for each Path that a warlock possesses, but may only correspond to the Path level that the character has. A warlock with only second level Summoning could not learn a fourth-level ritual; he would not yet understand what it was he was trying to do.

Initial pacts will grant the infernalist 3 dots of Dark Sorcery and three rituals with very little cost. From there, he must perform more and greater favors to increase his power. Really extreme pacts—instant soul-selling, for example—grant the warlock 5 dots and six rituals (and a lot less to bargain with later).

Costs

Initial Pact	10 points
Extreme Pact	15 points + soul
New Path	7 points
Path Levels	Path x 5
New Rituals	Path x 4

Example: Diamonda Plai has contacted Jadrax and agreed to do his bidding. He grants her 3 dots and three rituals in whatever Path she chooses. She decides to pursue the Paths of Summoning and Lust and Torment, taking 2 dots in the first and 1 in the second. Her rituals follow the same idea—two in the first, one in the second. From there, Diamonda will have to make greater deals (and spend experience points, if she is, Gods forbid, a player character) to increase these Paths and rituals.

Demons love to grant more favors to their pawns. The initial agreement offers just a taste of power, enough to get drunk on. The stronger the infernalist becomes, the bigger the favors and the greater the cost. Warlocks with plenty of black magic to command must offer more than they can ever repay.

Warlocks usually roll Intelligence + their Path level to successfully perform their magic. Most rituals take time, but some are fairly quick. The highest rites can take hours or even days to perform. Most rituals require extended rolls to accomplish; the average difficulty is 6, but they can go as high as 9 or 10 if something really large is at stake (summoning a demon, for example).

The pleasures of this Path are powerfully sexual. While carnality itself is not inherently evil, the rituals of this Path are tantamount to magical rape. The victim is not given a choice — he or she simply responds. The sadism of torment rituals should be obvious.

The intense pleasures or pains this Path commands can drain a person's Willpower, knock him out or simply control his feelings. Any successes the infernalist rolls are subtracted from the die pools of the target until the ritual ends. With one to three successes, the target is merely stimulated. After four or five, he becomes entranced by sensation and loses one Willpower for each success over the third. Six or more successes causes sensory overload, and the victim loses Health Levels until the warlock stops. These Levels heal quickly (one per turn), and a cruel infernalist can stop, start, stop, start... driving her victim to mindless surrender.

This Path requires a Social Trait (usually Manipulation, although Charisma or Appearance can work) + Path rating. The difficulty is the target's Willpower + 3. A Sleeper with 2 Willpower would be easy to affect, but a stern mage (Willpower 8) would be virtually impossible to control. Many rituals to these Paths exist; create your own based on the ones given below.

Path Ratings

- Two dice
- Four dice
- Six dice
- Eight dice
- Ten dice

Lust Rituals

• **Ecstasy:** This power causes intense pleasure in another individual simply through skin to skin contact. As long as the person is touched, she will feel this pleasure. Contact may be kept for any length of time.

•• **Attraction:** With this simple ritual, the infernalist subconsciously stimulates her target whenever she is in close proximity. This adds her Sorcery successes to any Social rolls (usually Seduction or Subterfuge) she makes against a given target. This ritual only works during one scene and against a select victim. If Diamonda, for instance, wanted to seduce Hermetic mage Simone, she might perform this ritual. If she scored three successes against Simone's Willpower + 3 (total of 7), Diamonda would add them to any Manipulation + Subterfuge rolls against the mage later in that scene. Simone is hooked.

••• **The Wave of Pleasure:** The warlock can cause pleasure from a distance; she merely has to meet a victim's eye to make contact with her. Once established, this contact lasts as long as the target is in sight, so long as the infernalist concentrates on maintaining it. The effects are the same as Ecstasy. Only one person can be affected at a time.



•••• **Paralyzation:** This power requires flesh to flesh contact. It is very similar to Ecstasy, but it is so utterly overwhelming that few can withstand the effects. This power causes the person to remain conscious for the experience, regardless of the "damage" she takes. Bombarded by pleasure, she is unable to move, think, or take any other action other than feeling the pleasure unless she makes a Willpower roll, difficulty 8, to resist the sensations. If the target breaks the spell, the pleasure stops, though the effects will linger.

••••• **Mass Lust:** This ritual invokes carnal ecstasy in a number of people. The infernalist "turns on" two individuals per success, so long as everyone is within one area. This can be done with extended rolls to incite a large number of folks into lustful frenzy. The difficulty for such a feat varies with the crowd concerned — a bunch of college students would rate a 4 or 5, whereas a cloister of monks might require a 9 or 10 difficulty to inflame. Lustful crowds will fall into indiscriminate sex for the duration of the scene, although characters who want to resist can roll their Willpower to keep their pants on.

Rites of Torture

• **Hurt:** This power allows the infernalist to cause pain through skin to skin contact. The effects will last as long as he maintains contact with the person. This pain is so terribly strong that it is sometimes used for torture purposes. The warlock has the option of specifying the exact nature of the pain and whether it will affect the victim's entire body or just part of it.

•• **Hunger:** This ritual causes a fierce hunger to wrack the victim's body. This spell can send vampires into a frenzy, make mortals grovel and drive werewolves berserk. Nothing the victim eats will satisfy the hunger until the infernalist ends the ritual. A similar ritual from the third level allows the warlock to inflict this upon someone who isn't present.

••• **Agony:** This is the same as Hurt, but the effects linger after contact has been broken. The victim will have to recover as if they lost five Health Levels to aggravated wounds, though no physical scars remain. Accompanying the reduced number of dice is a tremendous pain that should be noticeable in the roleplaying of the character. The character can heal the "wounds" with empathic Mind magick but little else. Although this phantom damage heals at the normal rate, the pain cannot be dulled.

•••• **Pangs of Hell:** This is even worse than Agony. The Pangs of Hell are such that the victim will take lasting damage. Victims who fail a Willpower roll, difficulty 7, will die in agony (or go into Torpor if they are undead). If they succeed, they will be completely incapacitated, unable to take any action and suffering unimaginable pain through every inch of their body. This pain is initiated through physical contact, but it may be maintained indefinitely by the infernalist without maintaining touch, so long as he continues to concentrate on causing the pain.

••••• **Mass Torment:** Like **Mass Lust**, this awful ritual invokes **Agony** on a roomful of people, with the same stipulations and effects of the pleasure ritual. These pains continue for as long as the infernalist works his rites. This is a favorite for sacrifices and is so horrifying to watch that any witnesses with a shred of humanity must make Willpower rolls or go somewhat insane.

Demonic Investments

Do not hold as gold all that shines as gold.

— Alain de Lille, *Parabolae*

Powers granted by demons to those who serve them are called Investments. Investments are often given to those who have not even sold their souls; some who practice the black arts summon and bind demons but agree to release them in exchange for Investments. Still, because of their evil origin, Investments have corruptive effects upon the "owners."

Demons refer to these powers as Investments not only because they invest a portion of Hell's power in the mortal, but also because they are actually investing in the individual in hopes of receiving the mortal's soul at the end of the investment period. Investments shape the recipient's Avatar to the demon's will. This has little effect on Sleepers, but can be disastrous to a mage.

Investments have ratings that roughly refer to their power level. Gaining a power means the individual is under some formal arrangement with the demon, usually involving a pact of some sort. The most powerful Diabolists often hold pacts in exchange for investments with several demons. Pacts range from "simple" favors to outright mortgage of the Diabolist's soul.

Size of the Pact	Investment Points Gained
Minor favor	1
Typical favor	2-3
Important favor	4-6
Important and dangerous favor	7-8
In exchange for soul	9-10

A character who acquires even a single Investment develops what is referred to as a "Witches' Nipple." This is the place through which the demon pours its foul essence, thus granting the Investment. A character who possess 5 or less points of Investments is only partially Awakened. A character with more than 5 points worth is fully Awakened, but his Avatar is shackled by the bindings of the demon. Such a character forever loses his potential to work True Magick unless he was already a mage. His role in reality has been set.

Demonic Investments are not subject to Paradox. While they are more reliable and less dangerous to use in the presence of Sleepers, their cost is great and eternal. Immunity to Paradox does not mean that mages, Technomancers and witch hunters will not pursue demonic characters quite the contrary. Most Investments will not work on holy days, and many malfunction around those with True Faith.

Sample Investments

Body Armor (variable): This Investment grants the infernalist an extra die for soaking damage per point placed in this investment. Up to 5 points may be placed in the Investment. The greater the protection, however, the more noticeable it becomes.

Lightning Speed (variable): The Diabolist may take one additional action per turn without dividing her dice pool for every 5 points placed in this Investment. Up to 15 points may be spent this way.

Super Strength (variable): The Diabolist gains one additional point of Strength per 3 points placed in the Investment, up to a maximum of 8 Strength.

Apport Object (4 pts): This Investment allows the practitioner to magically enchant one object. Whenever the Diabolist desires the object in her hand, all she has to do is speak a magic word and the object will appear.

Eyes of the Abyss (4 pts): The Diabolist can stare into the eyes of a victim and cause him to feel empty and void of emotion. The subject will become unable to take any action except stare into her eyes if the Diabolist makes a successful Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty equals subject's Willpower). The effects last for one turn per success.

Imp Familiar (4 pts): This Investment grants the Diabolist a minor demonling as a familiar. Use the Familiar Background for the creation of such creatures. They are loyal to the Diabolist, but even more loyal to their demonic masters.

Bestial Form (5 pts): The Diabolist can shapechange into the form of one particular natural animal. The character gains any natural abilities possessed by animals of that sort. This requires an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 7). The effect lasts for one scene.

Sign of the Inferno (5 pts): This Investment makes the Diabolist immune to all forms of heat and fire, excluding Hellfire. No flame attack will damage the character, although his clothing and possessions may burn or explode.

Hand of the Defiler (6 pts): The infernalist's right hand gains the power to kill plants, gnarl wood, rust metal and rot any flesh it touches. This effect does one level of aggravated damage per success (Dexterity + Brawl) and lasts one hour. The Diabolist suffers intense arthritis in his hand for a week after using this Investment.

Emotion Projection (6 pts): The Diabolist can cause a subject to experience whatever emotion she wishes them to feel by expending a point of Willpower and by making a successful Wits + Empathy roll (difficulty equals subject's Willpower). The effects lasts for one scene per success.

Regeneration (9 pts): The Diabolist has the power to heal all wounds, normal and aggravated, save those inflicted by Prime magicks, mages of the Celestial Chorus or those with True Faith, by expending one point of Willpower per Health Level healed.

True Magick: Ritual



The primary principle of magic is connection. The universe is a fluid, ever-changing energy pattern, not a collection of fixed and separate things. What affects one thing affects, in some way, all things: All is interwoven into the continuous fabric of being.

— Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*

While True Magick doesn't require the same kind of static form as Hedge Magic—in fact, it contradicts it—the weight of collective disbelief often demands greater effort than a simple “Well, I think it works that way, so it does” to function. This is especially true of summonings and penetrating the Gauntlet. Mages attempting these tasks contend with both static reality and, more often than not, the will of other, more powerful beings. Great feats, then, call for rituals.

Magick rituals are performed like any other magick Effects; the particulars depend on the beliefs of the mage (or mages) involved. The difference comes from the time rituals require. Some mighty tasks—calling forth an elemental, mind-wiping a roomful of people, stopping the path of the moon—will take extended magick rolls, often with higher difficulties than normal. The form of the ritual will vary from group to group. The importance is the focus of power and the number of successes achieved.

Monumental feats add +3 or more to magick difficulties and should have a minimum difficulty of 7; such works might form the pivotal part of a story or even a Chronicle. Such juggling is not arbitrary; reality just has its limits. The particulars will depend on the mage's intent, dramatic timing and the significance of the task to the world at large.

Example: Herr Flax cannot just bring his buddy Haasshh'Ykk the Demolisher across the Horizon and Gauntlet with a simple(?) Spirit 5/Life 5/Prime 2 Effect; if that were true, the world would have fallen long ago. Unbelief and the collective push of billions of sentient (and not so sentient) beings who want to survive reinforce the Barriers against Haasshh'Ykk's approach. Flax will have to achieve a lot of successes — 15 or more—to bring the

Demolisher across, and the difficulty will be 10. To make the task easier, Flax is burning a lot of Quintessence (10, in fact) and adding a large wild orgy to make Haasshh'Ykk feel welcome (Flax adds his High Rituals Skill to the mix). Still, the difficulty holds at 7. Fair enough—Flax' ritual will take a while. This gives the player cabal, who have discovered his plot, time to disrupt it and save the world.

It should be added that botching an extended magickal feat wrecks the whole thing. Massive Paradox backlashes might come from such a failure. While minor magick rituals — fortune-telling, faith healing, etc.— can pass for coincidental, summonings and earth-shaking disruptions are always vulgar. Only demonic will enables Diabolists to circumvent Paradox, and the cost is pretty high.

Sacrifices

Mages disagree about the significance of ritual sacrifices. Theories include ambient Quintessence, Gauntlet fluctuation, life-force surges, demonic (or divine) pleasure, Avatar fragmentation and simple sadism. Each theory has its adherents and detractors. Nevertheless, several types of magick, especially dark magick, demand live sacrifices.

The Metaphysic of Magick denies the need for live sacrifice; will alone should accomplish whatever needs to be done. Some mages may feel that such deeds are necessary to focus their will (or their masters' own...), or that they gain an extra Quintessence push from extinguished lives. Most just view it as a formality, a sign that one is sincere enough to give up what is precious to achieve one's ends. Those who traffic with the otherworldly know that demons and gods often demand a tribute of some kind.

In game terms, live sacrifice, human or otherwise, adds nothing to magickal feats. They might, in the case of black magic, form a necessary part of a ritual focus, but do not grant extra Quintessence or lower the difficulty (unless Prime magick is being used at the time; see Book Three in **The Book of Shadows**). Ritualis Infernal often requires live sacrifice, but such craft is not True Magick. Those who have truly Awakened know that the power of change is within the Self.

New Knowledge Abilities



Being ignorant is not so much a Shame, as being unwilling to learn.

—Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack*

The following Knowledge Abilities are invaluable when dealing with the Otherworld. These secrets are not common knowledge; beginning characters cannot purchase them. Only experience and hard-taught wisdom can teach the skills below:

Court Lore

This Knowledge Ability provides a mage with working knowledge of the rules and regulations of the Umbral Court, both written and unwritten. This Ability is a necessity for long-term court interaction; without it, the chance of a committing major *faux pas* is almost certain. This can also be used as a supplementary Ability with Diplomacy, High Ritual, Subterfuge, Expression, Seduction and any other Ability that is often used before members of the Court.

- Novice: You know when to shut up and when to say "Yes, Your Majesty!"
- Practiced: You can present yourself to a Member with some confidence.
- Competent: You can introduce Concerns before the Court and maybe get them addressed.
- Expert: You have the ear of the Court and can sway their opinions on certain matters.
- Master: The Court has awarded you a Knighthood; you have the right to be addressed as "Sir" by all Court Servitors.

Possessed by: Order of Hermes Mages, Brown-nosers

Specialties: Western Court, Eastern Court, Egyptian Court, Forms of Address, Seat Holders (members), Laws, Dominions, etc., etc.

Spirit Names

With this Ability, a mage can call upon the names of Umbrood or mythic beasts. This information is invaluable when summoning; many beings will not answer, and others may be offended. The True Names of such creatures, if available at all, are carefully defended. Mages who know too much may find more trouble than one who knows nothing.

This Knowledge is often traded for favors with other mages, Mentors, other spirits or wise supernatural beings. Bastet werecats and Garou Theurges are good sources of such knowledge if they can be bargained with.

- Ignorant: You know how to call up a Gaffling or two.
- Practiced: You know a few mythic creatures by name and can call on them with some confidence.
- Knowledgeable: You have secrets to trade and names of some significance. There is a good chance that you can call and be heard.
- Wise: You know a few True Names as well as the common appellations of most mythic beasts, many Umbrood and a few demons and high spirits. They may not appreciate your wisdom.

••••• Sage: The Akashic Record and the libraries of Doissetep are your playgrounds. You can name hundreds of spirits and beasts and call upon them with authority. True Names are a bit trickier, but you have a dozen or so among your collection. You have some stock among the otherworldly, although they resent your power over them.

Possessed by: Librarians, Bastet, Corax, Marauders, Scholars, High Hermetic Mages, Really Brave Data Pirates

Specialties: Demons, European Mythic Creatures, Paradox Spirits, Far Eastern Mystick Beings, Umbral Court, Elementals, Minions, Preceptors, Lords (very dangerous!)

Spirit Lore

Much of the knowledge in this book is unknown. Few mages can refer to the Umbral Courts, the Metaphysics of Paradox and the names of tempters and mythic beings with any real authority. The mysteries within these pages should remain for the players (and Storyteller) to know and the characters to find out—if they ever do!

Spirit Lore reflects a working knowledge of the spirit worlds and their denizens. Even mages who have traveled the Realms and spoken with Umbrood will be full of misconceptions and conflicting theories.

- Ignorant: You mean there's a spirit world?
- Informed: You've heard a few stories and may have met some spirits in your time.
- Knowledgeable: You have a working knowledge of the realms beyond and know some of their denizens by name.
- Wise: You have lore others would kill for. Prize it.
- Sage: The secrets of the spirit world remain a puzzle, but you have more of the pieces than most.

Possessed by: Hermetic Mages, Ancient Wizards, Occultists, Spiritualists, Shapechangers, Wise Shamans, Umbral Voyagers

Specialties: High Umbra, Middle Umbra, Shadowlands (very rare), Metaphysics, Spirit Beings

Recommended Reading

These books are by no means the be-all, end-all on demons and dark magic-users. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of books worth recommending. For those going into unfamiliar territory, however, the works below might prove useful for further inspiration. As with all Sleeper folklore, remember to take these offerings with a generous pinch of salt. We have deliberately avoided offering the names of real demonology texts; suggesting such books as game supplements wouldn't be terribly responsible of us.

- Alighieri, Dante — *The Inferno*

Anyone who needs to know why this is included should go back to middle school.

- Benet, Stephen Vincent — "The Devil and Dan'l Webster"

A short and more light-hearted look at bargains with the Devil. Perhaps most appropriate when considering deals made with servitors or tempters, to say nothing of a man with incredible oration.

- Brust, Steven — *To Reign in Hell*

An ingenious re-telling of the Angelic Revolt with sympathetic "fallen angels." May be used for some eye-openers, true or false, about who the true demons and angels are in this great conflict, or for insight into the machinations of a other-worldly court, like the Umbral Court.

- Carus, Paul — *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil*

A thought-provoking look at the progressions (and digressions) of the concept of evil personified throughout western civilization.

- Chaosium Games — *Call of Cthulhu*

A wonderful source of themes, moods, plots and creatures based on the infamous mythos of H.P. Lovecraft (see below).

- Dann, Jack and Dozois, Gardner, — *Demons!*

One of a very good series of anthologies from Ace Books, this collection features some top-shelf tales of the devilish and demonic, including Harlan Ellison's classic "Grail."

- DC Comics — John Constantine: Hellblazer, Swamp Thing (especially the Allan Moore years), Sandman, Doom Patrol and Doctor Occult.

These series' have been mentioned before, but inspire especially potent visions of demons, spirit entities and astral travel.

- de Givry, Grillot — *Witchcraft, Magic, and Alchemy*

Considered to be the omnibus of the Legions of the Night for many years, this book contains the familiar

woodcut portraits of the major demons. Contains purported samples of magic seals and details Sleeper folklore of demons and medieval witchcraft practices.

- Early, Christopher and Chupp, Sam — *Maleficium and Pax Dei*

These Ars Magica supplements offer a wealth of details on the Infernal and the Divine and the servants of both. Originally published by White Wolf, this game (and, one assumes, its books) is now available from Wizards of the Coast.

- Lehner, Ernst and Johanna — *Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft*

A fascinating, imaginative and sometimes amusing look at the portrayal of the demonic in western art.

- Lewis, C.S. — *The Screwtape Letters*

Before Narnia, there was Screwtape. A minor elder demon, he instructs his young nephew Wormwood about humanity, temptation and sin in a series of grim and humorous letters which comprises the book. Details the role of demons in temptation, and how much they actually have to work at corruption. Lewis was a respected theologian and philosopher of his time before he turned his hand to fiction. Dedicated to J.R.R. Tolkien.

- Lovecraft, Howard Phillips — *Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Supernatural*

The handbook for Things That Must Not Be. A large selection of Lovecraft anthologies (and other works based on his mythos) exist, but this collection offers many of his best tales in an easily-accessible package.

- Marlowe, Christopher — *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

The classic case of demonic pacts and servitude. A must-read for would-be barabbi or Storytellers wanting background for making pacts.

- Milton, John — *Paradise Lost*

Another classic, this one was the basis for Brust's *To Reign in Hell*. The original view of the fall of Lucifer and his crowd. The Revolt takes up about the first half of the book with the rest devoted to Creation, the Garden of Eden and the Fall from Grace with Lucifer as Satan the tempter.

- Pratchett, Terry — *The Color of Magic and The Light Fantastic*

Whimsical and clever cosmology in a somewhat lighter vein than many of the others books here.

- Time-Life Books — *Wizards and Witches*

From the *Enchanted World* series: this digs into more Sleeper myth and folklore about the nature of magic dating back to Merlin and up to around the Burning Times. Good digestible reading that's not too esoteric. The second chapter details "wizards" like Roger Bacon and Michael Scot, demonic pacts and craft and dealings with the supernatural.

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